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College English is published monthly from October to May at the University of Chicago Press, 5750 Ellis Avenue, Chicago, Illinois. Subscription price, \$4.00 per year, single copies, 55 cents; in Canada, \$4.35; in other countries in the Postal Union, \$4.60. *College English* and the *English Journal*, to one address, \$6.00; in Canada, \$6.70; in other countries in the Postal Union, \$7.20. Subscribers are requested to make all remittances in United States currency or its equivalent by postal or express money order or bank draft.

Correspondence from libraries, agents, and dealers should be addressed to the University of Chicago Press. All other communications should be addressed to *College English*, 211 West Sixty-eighth Street, Chicago 21, Illinois.

Entered as second-class matter September 26, 1939, at the post office at Chicago, Illinois, under the Act of March 3, 1879.

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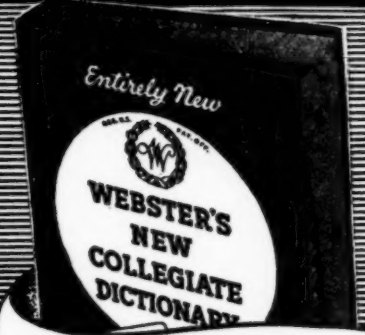
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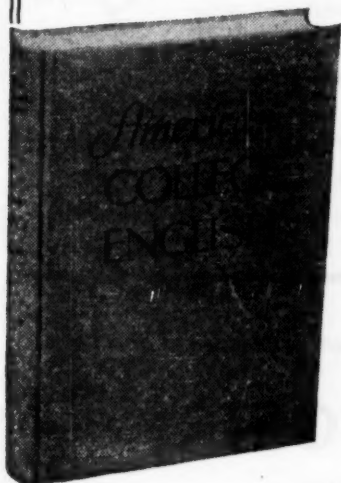
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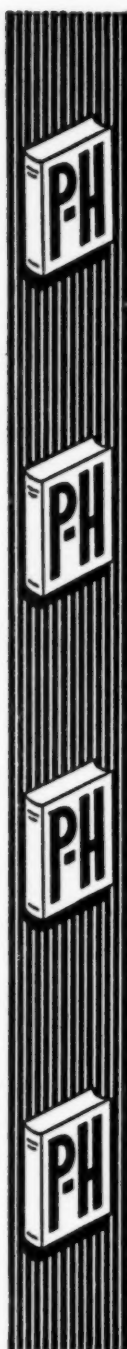
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Volume 11

OCTOBER 1949

Number 1

The Condition of American Writing

JOHN FARRAR¹

GIVEN an opportunity to write again in these pages after a long absence from them, with a whole rounded thirty years in the world of New York City journalism, publishing, and teaching to remember and with today's and tomorrow's desk to contemplate, there is a temptation to generalize up the mountain, across the field, and in the meadows, and to jump the brook as well. Having missed several copy-dates in an attempt to do otherwise, I capitulate to an almost adolescent urge to dash hither and yon.

Through this time, I have become more the publisher and less the book reviewer, and all this time, except for a short space in the twenties, has been harassed and turbulent, and the point of view toward writers and writing could not but change. The material from which a publisher observes writers and judges their work is in many ways special. Much of it lies before and extends beyond the printed page. He is often personal confidant as well as editor. He is of necessity impresario and, properly or not, sometimes parent and banker. Much of this data must remain locked in the vaults

of confidence, discovered perhaps by the thesis-writers of tomorrow. Yet the publisher cannot but judge an author by his character in addition to his sentence structure. The writing of today lies not only in the volumes on library shelves and reviewers' desks but in vast piles of manuscripts in the publisher's study. This intensifies and enriches his point of view, on the one hand; but it also dilutes and distracts it. I am aware of a certain distortion in the point of view and warn friends and readers of it.

American writing and the American writer have been much discussed since World War II. The schools and the colleges have been well aware of this, since thousands of people ask to be taught how to write stories and too few wish to know how to read and to write English. The well-wishers for our writers are most of them alarmed, and I am going to quote from and discuss a number of their articles, suggesting also that you read some of them entire if you have not done so. These articles have concerned themselves chiefly with the writers of poetry, fiction, and criticism, and most of them note sadly that new writers of developing stat-

¹ Chairman of the board, Farrar, Straus & Co.

ure have not emerged as they did between the wars and that the public which flowered so pleasantly for the writing giants of the twenties has now become withered and bitter. However, most of these observers end their essays on a curious note of hope, pointing out that times are confused, and that when non-confusion arrives, our writers necessarily will be less confused.

As background to their remarks on today's sterility, these commentators recall the literary renaissance of the twenties, the appearance of Fitzgerald, Hemingway, Dos Passos, Benét, MacLeish, and a score of others. They note that writers who had appeared before World War I, like Dreiser, Anderson, Cather, Frost, Sandburg, were loudly hailed and widely read along with the newcomers. They describe the "socially conscious" thirties, the proletarian novels, Farrell and Steinbeck, the southern folkways of Caldwell and Faulkner, Thomas Wolfe's reaffirmation of America, the prewar propagandists and their words for freedom and democracy. They show us that the correspondents of World War II were superior journalists and continue to attempt to be so. They applaud or deplore the influence of Kafka and the Existentialists. They point out that the best-seller lists after both wars were filled with titles of religious spirit and of promised ways of self-help. They mark the disillusionment of the Marxists and the deification of the lunatic fringe. They are then abruptly confronted and distressed by the lack of anything to get excited about.

As far back as September 1, 1947, in *Life* magazine, John Chamberlain somewhat solemnly explained that "sometime in the future the people of the U.S. and the rest of the world will discover—or rediscover—a number of worthy pur-

poses. And the pursuit of purpose will generate an energy that must eventually spill over into literature, which is part of life." In August, 1948, the *Partisan Review* published a symposium on "The State of American Writing" which was composed of answers to a number of questions by nine critics, including a short and dejected statement from H. L. Mencken. Notable for a number of things, including fine pieces from Messrs. Blackmur, Ransom, and Trilling, it was impressive that nine individuals could be summoned in this country who could more or less properly be termed critics. Since then, other such critical figures seem to be popping up almost daily to recognize the pale estate of our life and literature, and most of these ladies and gentlemen are in residence at the schools and colleges.

In January of this year, Wallace Stegner's "The Anxious Generation" appeared in the *English Journal*. It was a modest and kindly piece, sensitive—chiefly from the viewpoint of the teacher—to the problems of today's young writer. As the publisher judges from manuscripts from all over the world that crowd upon him, the teacher judges from those whom he meets in the classroom. Mr. Stegner is hopeful that his anxious generation will find its direction. I agree with him that these young people are writing for *themselves* in a sense better than any generation in the period of years we are discussing, and I find that a number of publishers agree with him in this; but that they are writing better for their *readers* is certainly far from true, and to correct this must be the concern of the English teachers as well as the publishers.

Mr. Stegner believes that there was more writing discipline in the Golden Twenties than there is today, that

"people who rebelled against every other sort of control willingly submitted to artistic disciplines of a rigorous kind." This is not the way I remember it. Mr. Stegner implies that he wishes today's young were more willing to accept such artistic discipline. I do not have so much opportunity to see them in the classroom as does Mr. Stegner, but I do read manuscripts from the high schools and colleges and have gained the contrary impression that young people of today seem to be far too willing to submit to artistic suggestion, if not entirely to discipline, and that one of the things they need most is to march out for themselves. Mr. Stegner says, "But the mere fact that it [this generation] has come to the schools instead of running away from them is an indication of a soberer and less coltish spirit." It may well be that members of this younger generation of writers will not cease being anxious until they get out of the schools. And I shouldn't mind their kicking up their heels higher, either.

In the March issue of *Horizon*, after I had started and set aside this article several times, there appeared Stephen Spender's "The Situation of the American Writer." It is far more than a British visitor's summation of our situation; it is a comparison of our situation with that of the British and European writer by a man who obviously admires us—in fact, confesses that he loves us. A first reading carried the conviction that Spender was exactly right in all his points, although he himself would not claim this. After several rereadings, this brilliant, sympathetic, and yet savage study of our writers and of our treatment of them still seems the most intuitive and provocative survey that has appeared in some time, but seems often wrong, particularly in emphasis. Mr. Spender is a fine writer.

He must also be an exceedingly practical man. Apparently he has observed us in somewhat the same manner as the late Sir Hugh Walpole. His essay is not only a study of our ideological idiosyncrasies but of our economic exigencies as well. It is all here: the thwarted hopes, the loneliness, the vulgarity, the exploitation, the despair. The wound administered by his poisoned sword will not soon heal in this publisher's side. Yet, fortunately, I believe that much of what he points out is not quite—almost, but not quite—true. There are checks and balances, perhaps observed best in the neighborhood of New York publishers who do not "keep up air-conditioned offices in huge luxuriously furnished buildings which are on the scale of the offices of the most profitable capitalist enterprises."

One of Spender's main discoveries is that the American writer is a lonely man, his loneliness resulting as tragically from success as from failure. In England and elsewhere, he claims, the writer finds his own kind more easily. He notes, too, the small public for the new and experimental writer and the escape to the universities. "The American universities are to a large extent subsidizing American contemporary literature. In fact, one can foresee a day when American literature might be divided into two channels: the commercialized success and the subsidized commercial failure."

You should read this piece of Mr. Spender's. Those of you who have already seen it will realize that his conclusions parallel my own at many points. He discusses Hollywood, book clubs, the teaching of writing, bookshops, conflicts in our society. It is unfair to quote from so stimulating and inclusive essay, but I risk one paragraph:

The uncreative loneliness is a too facile acceptance of the separation of the writer's

particular situation from all others. It is the loneliness of the successful who sneer at the unsuccessful, of the unsuccessful who reject every possibility of success, of the poets who retire early into University careers and concentrate on tremendous labours of literary criticism, of the editors and publishers who allow policy to be dedicated to them by sales managers, and equally of the editors who have no wish to expand their circulation beyond a tiny clique, the loneliness of those who retire bitterly to the Mid-West or the Pacific coast, or of those who accept alcohol as their fatality and write with it and about it. This acceptance of partial situations is mechanical because it is a reflection of the segregating, specializing, commercializing tendencies of the whole of America.

Yet I do wonder if, like many another English visitor, Mr. Spender really wasn't looking for a Bloomsbury in America, and, not finding one, spent more time in the universities than in getting to know our middle classes. Perhaps not; but I do wish to quote also from V. S. Pritchett's comment on his fellow-British critic's article, published in the *New York Times Book Review* of June 5.

Bloomsbury, with all its dazzling talent, was an aberration in the course of English literature, and is going out in a pretty glitter of academic art criticism to which its sons take more eagerly than to the rough ways of literature. An editor can find ten young art critics for every one promising literary reviewer. I look to the rankling bosoms of the lower-middle class; they qualify for Mr. Spender's literary community, for if any one is a displaced person the lower-middle class man is with a vengeance.

In the late spring and summer days, the *Saturday Review of Literature* stormed into controversy with articles by Robert Hillyer and others, concerned largely with the Library of Congress award to Ezra Pound and the influence of Mr. Spender's friend, T. S. Eliot. The issues involved were several and confused; but the one which concerns us here is the effect on the young writer of the Eliot

worshippers. Of Eliot's greatness as a poet, I have no doubt. That American poetry of today may be the greatest we have ever produced may be equally true; but Mr. Eliot and his followers have been deeply responsible for its obscurity and lack of tune. This responsibility, bolstered by I. A. Richards and others, has extended intellectually to prose through the teaching of English in our schools and colleges. The almost complete separation of the modern poet and the public has followed. Some may consider this not to be an evil in itself, although in my own opinion it is a very great evil. It is certainly devilish hard on the poet and on the publisher who would like now and then to publish poetry.

The chief danger in our teaching, thinking, and writing was indicated long ago by the shrinking of the poetry public and by the remoteness of the "new criticism," so called, and its effect on the school and college classroom, on both students and teachers.

One of the most distressing hours I can remember in the last few years was spent in the company of one of our great American poets, one who, although strongly original, has been influenced by Pound and Eliot. The poet felt lonely and bitter. For years he has not understood why he was not more widely read; about his latest book, even the critics, younger and less aware of him, seemed not greatly to care. I feared he would suspect me, as one who had once published him; for, though he felt that I had failed to market his wares successfully, we remain friends. Therefore, I did not say to him, "If you write as you write, as yourself (and I consider you a great poet), you will never achieve a wide public in your time. Although you are less obscure than many of your contemporaries, those who once read poetry have been so baffled by the

obscurity of many of your contemporaries that they have turned away from poetry as a whole. The critics naturally are tired of writing of poetry when no one follows their criticism. Critics like to be read also. You cannot have your cake and eat it too."

In many ways I have agreed with the various commentators on the condition of our writing and often with their feeling about the cause of this solstice, during which the strongly creative writer has not seemed to them to appear. It is my opinion, however, that a number of such writers *have* appeared, have not been recognized, and have not found the soil and the climate in which to grow. For a literature to burgeon as it did in the period between the wars, it is not enough that a few individuals recognize a few good writers. There must be a body of creative readers and of creative critics. Destructive critics and carping readers do not help the writer. I am aware that some great writing has been done in isolation; but this less than any age before is an age for a retreat to the ivory tower.

What has happened to American writers and readers since World War II might be called a huge psychological block. Deserted by their readers, the writers become either silent or fumbling, whereupon the readers desert in even greater numbers. This happened before, briefly, in the thirties, but was broken by the arrival of a strong contender or two and by the positivism and necessities of war. It is a curious fact that it should happen again at a time when there are probably more readers—and readers of books of some kind or other as well as of newspapers and magazines—than ever before in our history.

Writing is as hard as, or harder than, any other kind of work in the world. The writer, of all creative artists, is most

beaten upon by the ideas, thoughts, and actions of others. They *are* his work. Yet I do not believe that the strain of our present world situation is what is producing the fundamental difficulties for the American writer. He has always triumphed before and actually proved leader in such crises. I believe that the fault lies in this separation from the reader, and that two main factors have caused it: the intense self-consciousness which has grown up between the writer and the reader in the United States and the writer's retreat to the schools, colleges, and universities since World War II. In many ways the publishers are blamable for both these factors and must take personal as well as general responsibility.

Before I discuss the causes and results of these two phenomena, I must make plain that I am also aware of, and disheartened by, the writer's most immediate block—his lack of security due to the rapidly accelerating economic difficulties in which he finds himself. His distress may result not entirely from the fact that he realizes his chances of eating are lessening (particularly if he writes what he wishes to write) but that even his chances of publication are dimming from day to day. This is even bitterer, following as it does the boom period of the war, when many publishers and writers imagined that their public would continue to buy practically anything that was published. Cynics may feel that this shrinkage may have a salutary effect on writing. I doubt it. It may, however, have been true that many persons with a small talent were encouraged toward a career by what proved to be only a temporary glitter.

The self-consciousness of the American writer began in the twenties, if not before. The colleges recognized at last the home product and began to teach Frost

as well as Longfellow. This was a happy event and encouraged the wild young to take themselves seriously and to boost the exploitation of their works. Broadway publicity methods entered. The motion picture and later the radio accelerated the high jinks. The publishers did not lag behind. Parenthetically, I am not one who feels that writing for the motion pictures and the radio has necessarily harmed our writers, but it has often turned them aside and added to their self-consciousness. The book clubs increased reading publics but spotlighted the personality of the author as well as his work. Publishers were told to use modern merchandising methods and public-relations counsels. They tried both. As the author's picture-hat or hand-painted tie became important to the reader, his works, in a devious fashion, became less so. Moreover, there are few authors who can write for a mass public *all* the time and very few indeed whose work, if not their very lives, will not be blasted by too much contact with a fan public. The attention once bestowed on visiting English authors is now turned to our own. The women's clubs tired of British tones and clamored for good, straight American.

There was a negative reaction to this in quiet places, and the book reviewers and the authors themselves turned against it. With increased rewards, the publishers paid too great advances and overinfluenced and coddled their writers. Much material was published about the author business, the publishing business. The public began to consider that it owned its authors as it did its actors and baseball players. Similarly, it became lumberingly critical. The speed of communication, wide merchandising, and notably the radio made reputations in a few hours. When this happens, human nature

wants to tear down the reputations. There are now few enthusiasts for books, but only critics and "trials" and a vast number of people eager to pull a book apart rather than to be delighted by it. The author has become too *aware* of his public and frightened and embittered by his critics.

He began to study trends. He even found classroom support for this most dreadful of habits. I actually had a letter from a Ph.D. student asking me to answer a questionnaire with data on the sales, reviews, and reactions to a book, the hero of which was a schoolteacher. His investigation was to discover whether the public liked books about schoolteachers or would like them in the future. Was there a trend in that direction? Was it worth his while to write a novel about schoolteachers? (The novel in question did have a schoolteacher protagonist, but its theme was a subtle one of sex complications, which I trust have nothing whatever to do basically with the teaching of school.) This is such poppycock that I can find no words strong enough to damn it.

The author is coming to fear his own still, small voice. Listening to siren voices, he began to produce synthetic books—and is still doing so.

Such fault as lies in the schools and colleges in the separation of writer and reader I suspect is even more the publisher's onus than the academicians. It is none the less serious. The various writing courses had, of course, started even before World War I. They multiplied in the twenties and thirties. Out of them came a small group of writers and a few critics. There were the writers' conferences. There was an increased emphasis on the commercial or, perhaps a better phrasing, on "writing for publication." It was not yet, however, academic big business.

During the long and searing years of World War II, many young men read many books and dreamed of writing others. Given the opportunity when they returned, they flocked to study writing, which cannot, of course, be taught. But they sought the atmosphere in which to write with friendly critics close by. Others, for less engaging reasons, sought the literary market place. The results in arithmetic we know. They were colorfully detailed in a description of our writing fever in the August issue of *Tomorrow*.

At the start, with book sales high, there was great competition for the talent which was supposed to be found in the various types of writing courses across the country. The talent was indeed there. Publishers sent their editors widely to seek out the golden young. Sometimes the editors were informed. Sometimes the young were golden, sometimes not. They offered fellowships. Writing courses published their own magazines and books. Teachers of such courses vied with one another in their pride in the publication of works by students in their classes. The politics of teaching (or, indeed, of university presses) are scarcely less petty than those of commercial publishing-houses. The result, even in boom times, was overblown, unrealistic, and dangerous. Many in academic circles rebelled, and sharp critical voices were heard.

When times grew bad and publishing-houses less hospitable, many of these thwarted young writers turned to teaching and kept on with their writing. Others used their spare time in criticizing the work of their fellows who had achieved publication. The writing which two years ago, as it came from the colleges, seemed promising and fresh has faded in richness and decreased in tension. The criticism which floods the daily

and weekly reviews, both national and local, is often crabbed and uncharitable. There will be no help here to a literary renaissance unless the faults in the system are heeded and studied.

Is it not important, at this time, that English departments in secondary schools, colleges, and universities re-examine the whole matter of the teaching of English—rhetoric, creative writing, whatever it may be called? In fact, is it not important that the whole teaching of reading and English be re-examined, from kindergarten on? Already the maturity of the students in the colleges is decreasing. The instructor of a class of freshmen in a Virginia college told me the other day that in his class of eighteen- and nineteen-year-olds not one had ever heard of Ellen Glasgow, James Branch Cabell, or, indeed, of Thomas Nelson Page. No teacher in lower classes had bothered to tell them of the local literary heroes. As a publisher, and as one who has from time to time attempted teaching, I would have some ideas on what might be done, but they would naturally be hesitantly and humbly offered. Of one point I am sure: the difference between classes in creative writing and literary journalism should be sharply evident, and only the most professionally informed should attempt to teach "writing for publication," if, indeed, it should be taught at all except in extension courses of schools of journalism.

However, I do plead for a quick study of the whole question I raise here, and sincerely hope my plea will not be resented. It is not only the future of American writing that is involved; it is the communication of ideas.

As for the future of American writing after two wars, I believe the burden is on the critics and the publishers even more than on the writers themselves. Together

we seem to be failing the writers, for, in some fashion, we are helping to keep them apart from their readers. R. P. Blackmur, in a magnificent essay, "A Burden for Critics," in the summer (1948) issue of the *Hudson Review*, wrote:

Thus it is now clear that my purpose in proposing a heavy burden for criticism is, to say the least of it, evangelical. What I want to evangelize in the arts is rational interest, rational statement, and rational technique; and I

want to do it through technical judgment, clarifying judgment, and the judgment of discovery, which together I call rational judgment.

Remembering that the writing and publishing of books is one of the last free coasts left to free men and that to keep the coast open we must fight what Lionel Trilling has called "the malign materialism pervasive through the world and established in Soviet Russia," let us accept that burden in the fullest sense.

The Suchness of Literature

*A Socratic Dialogue in Defense of Poetry**

TRANSLATED, WITH NOTES, BY J E B

PERSONS¹

THE NARRATOR, *unnamed*
TREPHO
SOCRATES

ARISTOTLEMINUS
PLATO, *a youth*
WAITRESSES, *referred to as "Nymphs"*

NARRATOR: Am I late, O Trepho?

TREPHO: No; the others have not arrived. Did you just finish lunch?

NARRATOR: Yes. I ate at the "Polis and Chiton," and we had a noble discussion in which you, O Trepho, would have delighted much.

TREPHO: Was Socrates there?

NARRATOR: Yes, and so were Aristotlemenus and Plato

TREPHO: Who is Plato?

NARRATOR: Plato is a new graduate

* [*Theory of Literature*, by René Wellek and Austin Warren (1949), is not being received as a mere theory or a mere book. It is being resisted with academic ferocity as the Destruction of scholarship; and it is hailed as "an important milestone in the study of literature. It crystallizes a movement that has been under way for two decades in this country"—urging literary departments to "relegate to the background" study of social history or of "the psychological mechanisms, the political and social currents," social values, and all the real problems of ethics, sex, war, and private personality.

Hence this is the time to publish to the threatened world a dialogue that circulated in manuscript at the University of Iowa in the early 1940's, when Wellek and Warren were delimiting their common ground by defending it in constant debate against Norman Foerster and a host of other wits. This dialogue was itself a part of the "dialectic" of discussion in which the theory of their remarkable manifesto

was developed. I have presented this MS just as it was dug out of archives, without any mitigation or any additional notes (except the first below, which turned out to be needed as a practical guide to readers). On the interesting problems of influences and origins I have added nothing; and I have not dated it with any degree of accuracy.—Joseph E. Baker, University of Iowa.]

¹ Novices who are just beginning the study of this dialogue may profit by the experience of experts in that field: Avoid the biographical fallacy; resist the temptation of trying to identify any character here with any living pedagogue. *Multiple* identification has been recommended by a small closed circle of critics known as the "Seven Typists of Ambiguity." I cannot vouch for any of their forty-nine interpretations. Their ingenuity has discovered at least three incompatible Platos in the Socratic Dialogues, besides the historical Plato. Evidence has been adduced to show that all four flourished at once in Iowa City.

student, very young, but he has a real talent for writing witty dialogue.

TREPHO: And what was the discussion about?

NARRATOR: Well, here is what happened during our noon-hour banquet at the "Polis and Chiton":

Socrates and Plato entered together while the rest of us were listening to Aristotleminus. Socrates sat there studying the menu for a while in silence, which gave me an opportunity to say to the waitress: "O, Nymph, Oh a plate o' potatoes for Plato, s'il vous plait, O." When the general groan had subsided, Socrates asked why Aristotleminus was in such high spirits. I explained: "He has just come from his admiring disciples, to whom he has delivered a discourse on Literature as Such."

SOCRAT.: Are you then indeed able, O Aristotleminus, to define Literature?

ARISTOT.: Indeed I am, Socrates. That is what I know best.

SOCRAT.: How fortunate I am that you should come here! For I have talked about literature all my life, but when young men asked me what it is, I have never been able to tell them exactly what it is that I am talking about. Yet I continue to talk about literature, and I am convinced that the importance of humane letters in a man's training becomes not less, but greater, in proportion to the success of modern science. More and more mankind will discover that we have to turn to poetry to interpret life for us, to console us, to sustain us. Without poetry, our science will appear incomplete.²

² These sentences are to be found in "Literature and Science" and "The Study of Poetry" by Matthew Arnold. Yet there are difficulties in our way if we try to date this dialogue at any time at which Socrates could be identified with Matthew Arnold. Some Platonist mystics hold that "Soc-

ARISTOT.: Your enthusiasm, if you will pardon the term, is indeed admirable, Socrates. But I can see that you do not know the nature of literature As Such.

SOCRAT.: And can you define not only Literature, but even Literature As Such?

ARISTOT.: That is the only kind of definition I am interested in, Socrates.

PLATO (*here interposing*): He has written a book, Socrates, on that very subject, which is called *Peri Poietikes*, or *Understanding Poetry*.³ That is the book I have been urging you to read for several weeks. It is a gift of the gods to teachers of poetry. Not that it is in the least pedagogical, and that is the best thing about it.

ARISTOT.: Oh! I hope not pedagogical!

I said: While no one should be pedagogical, I think we ought to be fair enough to admit that, historically speaking, in the Renaissance the purpose of literature was delightful teaching, and most Greek and Roman literature rests on the belief that a serious author is a moral teacher.⁴

rates" is the name of a *daimon* or even a demon, who spoke through a different spiritualistic medium in each different century. Sidney, Shelley, and Irving Babbitt are cited as successive incarnations of this demon, clogged by more or less of the dross of material error. This theory smacks too much of emotional abandon to be acceptable, but no other theory accounts for the inconsistencies of date, names, and languages which have so long disturbed students of this dialogue.

³ A book by this title was written by Aristotle, who seems to be a different philosopher; and another, probably later, by Cleanth Brooks and one Warren. Professor Teufelsdröckh, an eminent Platonist of the past century, has proved that some of the sentences in this dialogue are found in the book by Brooks. Scholars long assumed that the other author was the Warren who lectured at Iowa City in the early twentieth century, but the Higher Criticism of our generation has shown that this was not the Warren who wrote the book. The unity of Warren is no longer maintained.

⁴ The unnamed speaker in this dialogue has often been identified with Douglas Bush of Harvard, since

SOCRAT.: I have looked into the book *Understanding Poetics*⁵ by Aristotlemimus, but I seem quite unable to get important ideas by reading. I saw nothing in this book that seemed to me new. I cannot help feeling that books are like paintings: if you ask them a question, they preserve a solemn silence.⁶ But now that the author himself is among us in questionable shape, perhaps you would consent, O Aristotlemimus, to resolve a few difficulties for me.

ARISTOT.: Gladly, O Socrates. I was brought here to educate the faculty.

SOCRAT.: It has always seemed to me that poetry is nothing less than the most perfect speech of man, that in which he comes nearest to being able to utter the truth.⁷

ARISTOT.: Do not impose on poetry burdens which are not her own. You have been misled, Socrates, by reading too much of those Victorian poets, Horace and Milton, who made the mistake of writing criticism, too, as if a poet could know anything about poetry! The poet has his worst moments when he tries to be a philosopher or, rather, when he succeeds in being one.

SOCRAT.: But the vision of philosophy is sublime. The order it reveals in the world is something beautiful, tragic, sympathetic to the mind, and just what every poet, on a small or on a large scale, is al-

ways trying to catch. In philosophy itself investigation and reasoning are only preparatory and servile parts, means to an end.

PLATO: Poetry, then, is not poetical for being short-winded or incidental, but, on the contrary for being comprehensive and having range? If too much matter renders it heavy, that is the fault of the poet's weak intellect, not of the outstretched world?⁸

SOCRAT.: Why, yes, Plato; that is right.

ARISTOT.: Why, no, that is not right; it is old fashioned! I am surprised that you would utter an idea that was uttered before our present generation. Of course, poetry, for us, is the poetry written today. And criticism, for us, is the criticism written by poets who are writing today. The sensualism or aestheticism of our day has decreed that theory is not poetical.

SOCRAT.: As if all the images and emotions that enter a cultivated mind were not saturated with theory! The prevalence of such a sensualism or aestheticism would alone suffice to explain the impotence of the arts. The life of theory is not less human or less emotional than the life of sense; it is more typically human and more keenly emotional. For this reason philosophy, when a poet is not mindless, enters inevitably into his poetry, since it has entered into his life. To object to theory in poetry would be like objecting to words there.

ARISTOT.: But if poetry, for us, is the poetry written in our own generation, then poetry, for us, means the poetry of

these statements occur on pp. 38 and 40 of his *Humanism and the English Renaissance*. Whether or not he was telling the truth is difficult to say, since the literature of Greece, Rome, and the Renaissance was so inferior that little of it has survived.

⁵ If the reference is to *Understanding Poetry*, the mistaken spelling (retained as it stands in all our best manuscripts) may be the fault of a copyist, or perhaps of Socrates, who was not literary.

⁶ This sentence is ascribed to Socrates in another dialogue written later by the young student Plato, but there it is addressed to Phaedrus.

⁷ Cf. "Wordsworth" by Matthew Arnold. A demoniacal statement.

⁸ These last two speeches and the sentence preceding them are found in Santayana's *Three Philosophical Poets* (the title of which is clearly a blunder of some kind) and another passage from the same curious book begins at the end of Aristotlemimus' next speech and extends through the next speech by Socrates (pp. 10-14 and 124).

Joaquin Miller and James Whitcomb Riley, as the poetry for our ancestors at one time was, necessarily, the poetry of Cynewulf and Caedmon. We must defend the autonomy of poetry, by which I mean we must keep poetry neatly circumscribed. The poet is a maker, not a communicator. A poem must communicate poetry. Art never expresses anything but itself.⁹ We must not let poetry break out of her pretty bower and start trying to do work that is not her own.

SOCRAT.: But I have always found that poetry was constantly seeking to perform the heaviest tasks for humanity and that only poetry is strong enough to accomplish these. Only the poet can make a really effective communication. The aim of the poet is to state a vision, and no vision of life can be complete which does not include the articulate formulation of life which human minds make, the profound application of ideas to life.¹⁰ The poets whose lives and writings I have studied did not seek to avoid burdens.

ARISTOT.: That is true indeed of the Victorian poets, among whom I number Lucretius, Dante, and Spenser. But we moderns have got beyond that. You will

⁹ This last sentence is found in the works of Oscar Wilde, the two preceding in the works of Cleanth Brooks, who is evidently the inventor of the doctrine. It was one of the basic principles of the "New" Criticism, which must have flourished before the 1890's, when the idea became fashionable. This helps us to date the dialogue. Snatches of a music-hall parody survive, from which we quote:

"Poetry communicates poetry alone—
Only a telephone can telephone!"

¹⁰ It is one of the triumphs of two generations of textual research to have proved that this last phrase is by Matthew Arnold and the rest of the sentence by T. S. Eliot. Yet, if we admit this, what can we make of the well-known fact that the bloodiest conflict recorded in the history of American literature is the one between the Arnoldians (who would seem to be in agreement with Eliot) and the so-called "Followers of Eliot"? Perhaps "Followers" in this designation means "Pursuers" (in the sense of avenging furies). Something seems to be wrong here.

find that the modern poets have almost freed poetry from these alien burdens.

SOCRAT.: Well, Aristotlemenus, I suppose I shall not have much occasion to apply your theory, for I do not teach Contemporary Poetry.

PLATO (*breaking in*): Oh, but Professor Aristotlemenus does not confine his theory to the poets who have evolved the theory.

ARISTOT.: No, Socrates, I fear one cannot participate fully in the poetry of John Crowe Ransom, for example, and continue to enjoy Shelley on the old basis.¹¹ And so, Socrates, you must learn to read Milton as I read Emily Dickinson, and you must be careful to get nothing from seeing *Hamlet* that you would not get from plays by Pinero and Jones. Otherwise, I must say that you are confusing poetry and pedagogy.

[At this word "pedagogy," Plato, Aristotlemenus, and I showed the proper reaction: we groaned and writhed and thus purged ourselves of pity and horror. Socrates failed to react in this way.]

SOCRAT.: Do you mean that *Paradise Lost*, read as Milton intended it to be read, is more pedagogical than *Understanding Poetics*?

ARISTOT.: In the sense that it teaches more, yes. Therefore, it is all wrong and should be relegated to the classroom. We should leave *Paradise Lost* to the students.

SOCRAT.: But Milton seems to be in agreement with such critics as Sidney and Dryden and Shelley and Coleridge and Arnold and Emerson and Lowell.

ARISTOT.: Surely you do not think that any of those men knew anything about poetry! Two critics who know the nature of poetry are Professor Adler and

¹¹ By a Brooks—internal evidence does not enable us to determine whether by Cleanth or Van Wyck. They were in brotherly agreement on this point.

Professor Maritain. Such men as Shelley and Dryden are, I fear, pedagogical.

SOCRAT.: But all those critics in the English tradition wrote poetry.

ARISTOT.: That is true. But it is easy to explain their ignorance. They did not think of poetry As Such. There is a great difference between merely writing successful poems and actually thinking about poetry AS SUCH. And if poetry is worth studying, it is worth studying *as such*. Poetry is an art, and nothing but an art.¹²

SOCRAT.: What kind of language, if not poetic language, can be used to convey wisdom?

ARISTOT.: That, O Socrates, is the province of science.

SOCRAT.: What contemporary scientists have taught us moral wisdom?

ARISTOT.: Scientists today, Socrates, do not know their real work; just as the poets and critics of the Ancient, Medieval, Renaissance, Neo-Classical, Romantic, and Victorian periods did not know the true nature of poetry.

SOCRAT.: But in *Understanding Poetics* you have shown that when a scientist preaches pacifism he is *not* using scientific language.

ARISTOT.: Well, it is not poetry. So it must be science. I have divided the uses of language into those two categories. We must not let categories get mixed up. That would indeed be horrible.

PLATO: Oh, horrible.

I added: Most horrible! What if poetry should forget that it is an Art!

SOCRAT.: What is an Art?

I said: The production of objects of aesthetic appeal.

SOCRAT.: What is aesthetic?

ARISTOT.: That which charms the senses, like music and painting. The closer literature resembles music, the closer it comes to being great literature. What appears beautiful to me would be a book about nothing, which would support itself by the inner strength of its style.¹³

SOCRAT.: To what senses does poetry appeal?

ARISTOT.: To sight and hearing.

SOCRAT.: Then when a Greek play is translated, so that the sound on the ear and the sight of the type before the eye completely changes, the original work of art completely disappears, and we get nothing aesthetic from drama in translation?

ARISTOT.: Since music and painting cannot be translated, of course literature cannot be translated. Except, of course, for pedagogical purposes.

SOCRAT.: Would it be possible to translate Tolstoi?

ARISTOT.: Can you translate Rembrandt or Raphael? And the analogy between the art of the painter and the art of the novelist is, so far as I am able to see, complete.¹⁴

SOCRAT.: And a play by Shaw acted on the stage is an entirely different work of art from the play by Shaw printed in a book, since all the sights and sounds have been changed?

ARISTOT.: Literature is by definition an art. A work of art is by definition a thing made. You must not question defi-

¹² A scholar almost contemporary, Egan, in *The Genesis of Art for Art's Sake*, speaks of "a phrase that may be called the German version of *l'art pour l'art* . . . *Kunst als solche* (Art for its own sake)." Consequently, some authorities today argue that this whole dialogue was originally written, or at least spoken, in German. But it is hard to think of Plato as a German—or even Socrates.

¹³ This sentence was written to his mistress by the author Flaubert, about 1850. He may be Aristotimus. His ideas date satisfactorily.

¹⁴ By Henry James, one of the New Critics. The date of the work in which this sentence appears (1884) shows that he joined the New Criticism when it was no longer new.

nitions. All our knowledge is based on definitions. If you start bringing in specific matters which do not fit our definitions, we must suspect that your thinking is unphilosophical, after the manner of pedagogues and poets and the English empiricists.

At this point, I thought things were going rather hard with Socrates, so I deflected the conversation, by remarking: Speaking of pedagogy—one of my sophomores this morning said she had often read sentimental poetry and heard people make self-pitying remarks, but she never realized how evil such a mood was until she read *Richard II*.

PLATO: And that, Aristotleminus, makes me think that perhaps Socrates is not entirely wrong. For something of the same kind was said in my class the other day when I was teaching *Philoctetes*. I was teaching it in translation, and I must say that I got something from the play that was not merely pedagogical. Yet it was not merely aesthetic.

ARISTOT.: Sophocles, O youth, was a great Artist. Therefore you must not look for any generalizations in Sophocles. It is necessary to cross out the choral odes before you begin reading a play by Sophocles.

PLATO: But I am not even talking about the odes. One of my students had asked how anyone could know that one thing was bad and another was good. He was answered by another student, who said that anyone who has read *Philoctetes* would know by his own naked reason that treachery and cruelty are bad, just as anyone looking at a controlled experiment in science can see that the facts are facts.

SOCRAT.: You see, Plato, this illustrates what I was telling you yesterday, that virtue is knowledge, and evil is ig-

norance. And that, gentlemen, is the moral justification of great poetry. Literature, by relating the various powers of human nature, becomes the chief means by which men advance in wisdom.

ARISTOT.: But surely, Socrates, you would not say we get a message of moral wisdom from Shelley or Keats?

SOCRAT.: At moments, Aristotleminus, even Shelley and Keats are inspired by the gods. And when they are not, they are likely to write passages of egotistical self-pity which is a moral poison to many young souls.

ARISTOT.: There, you see, reading literature is just as likely to be morally bad as good.

PLATO: If that is true, perhaps statesmen would be wise to ban poetry entirely from the public school system.

SOCRAT.: Not at all. For those who go on and read *Richard II* see this sentimental poetry in its proper context, and, by advancing from the sentimental prettiness of Keats and Shelley to the contemplation of similar aesthetic gems as mere parts of the character of Richard as a whole, they awaken to the superior beauty of moral excellence. Beautiful forms make the best beginning for the ascent to noble thoughts and the real love of wisdom. And when I say "philosophy" it is this love of wisdom I mean, not the construction of systems of definitions.

ARISTOT.: If we may ignore your perverse misinterpretation of philosophy, let us go back to the drama, where your theory is downright illegitimate! Ninety-nine per cent of the plays on the New York stage do not give us this kind of moral wisdom, and consequently I do not see how you can feel right in seeking this sort of thing in Shakespeare. Surely all members of a literary genre obey the same laws.

SOCRAT.: What makes a play a Play As Such may be merely a matter of art. But what makes a play take rank as literature is a matter of greatness. It is true that Pinero and Jones do not give us the kind of plays that advance us in humane knowledge, and hence in virtue. But of Shakespeare I think it may be said that he was the man who of all Modern, and perhaps Ancient, Poets had the largest and most comprehensive soul. Shakespeare's excellence is not the Fiction of a tale, but the Representation of Life. He that has read Shakespeare with attention will perhaps find little new in the crowded world.¹⁵

PLATO: Indeed, Socrates, if I ever become head of an Academy, I think I shall include Literature not As Such but as a branch of humane learning—as the record, in terms of beauty, of the striving of Mankind to know and express itself.¹⁶

ARISTOT.: Plato, my boy, you have a knack for writing fictitious dialogue. You may become a real artist if you confine yourself to literature As Such. But you must forget the academic world and drop your political interests and avoid mathe-

matics. And more poisonous than any of these is your philosophy. If you try to keep up these other interests, you will never amount to a hill of beans as an author.

NARRATOR: And thus, O Trepho, with such prudent advice to Plato, the conversation at the "Polis and Chiton" broke up. I told them that I had an appointment with you, and Aristotleminis went to explain to a group of students the nature of Literary History, *as such*.

¹⁵ This is from a regional work, *The Athenian Scholar*, by the twentieth-century incarnation of the Socratic demon who was nicknamed "Norman Foerster." We know almost everything about this critic except his real name. The nickname (which has been found in records as far away as the "hill chapel," North Carolina, and Meudun, France) was given him because:

1. He lived in the midst of a forest, called by Milton the "Grove of Academe" (*Iowa Regained*, Book IV, l. 244).
2. The *Wappen des Foerstlers* was unearthed by archeologists working on the spot.
3. He dwelt in a Norman tower. This portion of his domicile has been restored and is appropriately preserved as a museum of midwestern literary culture.

This Platonist, whom we shall have to continue calling "The Norman Foerster," wrote *Standards—Up and at 'Em*, and collaborated with Captain W. Schramm in revising Irving Babbitt's *O! B. Creative*.

¹⁶ The Socratic demon here speaks with the voice of Dryden and of Dr. Johnson.

Geoffrey Chaucer and Youth

HOWARD ROLLIN PATCH¹

ACCORDING to the best available evidence, some year early in the present decade marks the six-hundredth anniversary of the birth of Geoffrey Chaucer. This is a fact that would, I am certain, mean much to literate Americans if it were not for the further obstacle of language, which has made the poet seem farther removed from us perhaps than even

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Dante or Virgil, whose works have become increasingly familiar in translations. Critics from Dryden to Lowell have offered various suggestions to keep us from being bothered by the early English forms in Chaucer's vocabulary, but it does not seem to help. Persistent readers are annoyed by being unable to make the verse scan; college graduates, undismayed by classroom memories,

may go further, but the casual seeker turns away after one glance at the queer words. It is all desperately ironic. A poet who belongs with the very great, whose writings have vast vitality, who above all things is entertaining, is now set aside as musty and impossible. Indeed I am not sure that he is not regarded as academic. Yet he has, I am convinced, a special appeal for readers of our own day and our own country, and in particular for the younger generation.

I am not thinking of the time when Hollywood will take over the *Canterbury Tales*, and in a film crowded with armor and peaked headdresses and "methinks" and "yclept" will give us a film reeking with quaintness. What I mean is that the poet offers something which may even be called "local," because it seems to belong particularly to our time and place. And that, in a sense, is true even of his language, which despite the grammar and the forms is again and again in our idiom, as Lowell reminded the British at the Court of St. James when they tried to rebuke him for his Americanisms. Even more, however, than the use of such expressions as "I guess" and "Fame's place" (for the "house of Fame") and "to play" ("to amuse one's self"), the robust element in the use of oaths and the obscene is about as extensive as in the seventeenth century and—we are compelled to admit—in the ordinary speech of our own land. There is a pendulum that governs fashion in such matters, and the generations that followed the first and second world wars have been playing a little wicked by larding their conversation in this way.

The same thing is true regarding Chaucer's plots. We all know and talk about the realism of Dos Passos, Hemingway, Steinbeck, and Faulkner, but the fourteenth-century poet has stories that are quite as extreme as any of these

in the matter of a broad appeal. It is in our day that the first unexpurgated translation of his works has appeared, and so too we now have English versions of Boccaccio's *Decameron* and the *Satyricon* of Petronius Arbiter made accessible in cheap editions. If we want the fullest possible view of human life unadorned, then here it is in the round in Chaucer, and no writer of our time has gone further than he does in the "Miller's Tale" or the "Sommoner's Tale." To be sure, he says his say with a Rabelaisian healthy gusto that puts to shame the nasty tone of some modern authors, and his natural manner is based on his fundamental rejoicing that God made the entire human body and therefore it is all good. But he leaves nothing out. Plots with vices of all kinds are set before us; the nonmoral "emancipated" man and woman, the cheat and liar and drunkard and pervert, all depths of degradation are there. And yet he is inclusive both ways: he has the virtues too and the saints and heroes. Such breadth gives meaning to Dryden's observation that here is "God's plenty."

But Chaucer is a realist and a modern too in still another and better sense. Even when he approaches the most fantastic themes, even when he lets imagination take him far from the Custom House and the streets of London, he differs from other writers of his time by keeping to a closely graphical and life-like presentation of his material. Take the extraordinarily natural qualities in his account of the flight of the eagle in the *House of Fame*. Or—since that passage is fairly well known—turn to the "Squire's Tale" and the description there of the crowd of people that swarmed around the horse of brass. This mechanical creature, borrowed in all probability from the world of eastern folklore, had stirred a tremendous interest in the crowd, and we hear the people comment from their vari-

ous points of view. Some think it is of fairy origin. Some fear it is another Trojan horse with warriors inside. Still others think it is produced by magic and will soon vanish. So, Chaucer says, they chatter and argue as ignorant people commonly debate about things that are too subtle for them. They always fear some dangerous implication:

Of sondry doutes thus they jangle and trete
As lewed people demeth comunly
Of thynges that been maad moore subtilly
Than they kan in hir lewednesse comprehend;
They demen gladly to the badder ende.

There is the whole thing—the whisper of the gossips, the malicious superstition of the throng, and all of it set in a story made of the stuff of dreams and Oriental romance. It has long been recognized that Chaucer is never quaint—except for those who fail to get through the barrier of his language. This is the way he sees everything, closely and realistically. And so do we. The modern American off duty seldom takes the road to Xanadu or Tryermaine; in the same mood, perhaps, the medieval poet left the “Squire’s Tale” unfinished.

Some of the qualities I have been talking about are also British. Lawrence and Huxley use what I have chosen to call robust material and the broader themes in their plots; the Oxford undergraduate says “my God” and all the rest of it. But I think the English in general are more proper than we, and across the sea a fear of vulgarity keeps people from certain features of speech and subject matter that we not only only tolerate but flaunt.

We are rather inclined to be proud of the “mucker pose.” It is a mistaken expression of our wholehearted belief in man and his potentialities; and we suppose that by being common we are loyal to the common people. We celebrate the

plain-spoken man, like Abraham Lincoln or Will Rogers, and we satirize the aristocratic element. Jefferson is our type rather than George Washington. There is something of this prejudice in Chaucer, not only in his simplicity of speech (compared with some others) but also in his pervasive and genuine democratic sympathies. This, I may add, is where he conspicuously shows a medieval touch. For his doctrine of democratic fairness, of nobility as springing from virtue rather than from family or wealth, this he got from Boethius and the *Roman de la Rose* and Dante. Indeed the idea of the sacredness of human personality spreads more and more in the Middle Ages; and the definition of personality given at the outset by Boethius, borrowed by numerous writers, and adopted authoritatively by St. Thomas Aquinas, finds its supreme exemplification in the portraits of the Canterbury pilgrims. A social consciousness too developed throughout the entire period; we see it in the Franciscans and their work, in the rebellions of Wat Tyler and others, and in the hot-bellied utterances of William Langland and his school. Now Chaucer did not stand on a soapbox in the square and denounce public wrongs; but when he read aloud his poems at Court he was showing, quietly and discreetly, the important traits in even the commonest of men. His poor Parson and his Plowman are better than many a loftier type in the political and ecclesiastical world, and Chaucer plainly says as much. What is strangest of all for a world of elegance is that the poet likes and even loves such men. When in the presence of this earl and that duke he told how the Plowman had hauled many a load of manure and was an honest laborer who loved God best and then his neighbor as himself, and who did many a job for many a luckless wight, he prob-

ably stirred a smile, but the nobles could hardly fail to realize that in his opinion ordinary labor has its dignity. More than once the poet refers in his works to the "common profit"—a term derived from fourteenth-century socialism and meaning the general good—and he regards it as of high importance.

There is at least one other way, I think, in which the poet's temper is congenial to ours, and that is his liking for clear, unmedicated poetry, of the kind Spenser later used for purposes of edification and many English poets have written until writers like Lewis, Auden, and Spender began to take up a cause and harnessed the Muse for the proletariat. This is not to say that verse should never be used for preaching; the best art is not produced necessarily for art's sake alone. But I think the British have been going rather more doctrinal of late, while American poets have preserved more of a concern with mere beauty. In this vein I can cite passage after passage from Chaucer. One thinks immediately, of course, of the description of the garden in the *Parliament of Fowls*. But take such a stanza as that introduced in the love scene of the *Troilus*:

O blisful nyght, of hem so longe isought,
How blithe unto hem bothe two thow weere!
Why nad I swich oon with my soule ybought,
Ye, or the leeste joie that was there?
Away, thow foule daunger and thow feere,
And lat hem in this hevene blisse dwelle,
That is so heigh that al ne kan I telle!

I wish I could convey the full meaning of these lines to some moderns and then read the whole passage aloud to them. Or take the "Balade" from the *Legend of Good Women*, where the names carry a beauty that may be called even modernistic. Couplets here and there and even single lines come to mind:

"And thow, Symois, that as an arwe clere
Thorough Troie rennest ay downward to the
se. . ."

"In dremes," quod Valerian, "han we be. . ."

But I hardly need to labor the point. Here is one reason why critics uninformed about the Middle Ages used to think of Chaucer as belonging to the Renaissance.

It is true, no doubt, that in some ways the qualities I have mentioned—the outspoken language, the broad subject matter, the democratic spirit, and the pure poetry—are those that the English also appreciate. The fact remains that they are what we in this country particularly enjoy in our reading, and they seem to belong at times especially to us. Except for the somewhat legalistic matter of grammar, then, I would say that Chaucer talks our language and is, I venture to add, more fully comprehensible in that way to the average American than almost any other famous man of letters. Whatever his limitations, for us he is more inclusive than Fielding or Dickens, Keats or Byron or Spenser; he is much nearer to the crowd than Wordsworth or Milton.

But what of his possible appeal for the younger generation? I may now remark that Chaucer has a unique value for American readers in general and for youth in particular because, to an extent that is amazing when you stop to consider it, he is the poet of youth. We cannot ignore this feature by urging that he was writing for an age that was in itself immature. No one who has studied the culture of the twelfth century or the thirteenth, who has relished the ironies in the life of Eleanor of Aquitaine or that of Frederick of Sicily, or who has read the *Romance of the Rose* and a little at least of the *Summa theologiae* of St. Thomas Aquinas, will suppose that the

fourteenth century was likely to be unsophisticated when it came along. Perpendicular Gothic is not childlike. The laws and revolts and the fashions suggest even a tired period. But against all this, with the plagues and the uprisings, Chaucer has the buoyancy and the hope of the morning. At the outset he takes over the stale conventions of Courtly Love and gives them freshness; in the latter part of his career he finds high revelry in the debate of the Marriage Cycle. He is all energy; like American culture, he seems only recently come of age. Lowell found in his works a "vernal property that soothes and refreshes," implying quite truly that the poet is young in heart.

But more than all this, his special preoccupation is young people. Run over the characters in his poems and see how often they take the important place in his plots. This is true not only of the minor poems but also of many of the *Canterbury Tales*, beginning with the story of young Palamon and Arcite, important figures in the "Miller's Tale" and the "Reeve's Tale," the early experiences of Constance, and so on. The Pardoner tells of a company of riotous young folk in Flanders; the Wife of Bath, of course, is concerned with a young and lusty bachelor. Chaucer's greatest plot, that of *Troilus and Criseyde*, has to do with young manhood and young womanhood; the problems of his greatest character, the Wife of Bath, are not those of the fully adult. Like the Franklin, the poet seems to yearn over the fresh young Squire in the "General Prologue," and he gives us a masterly portrait of another in the person of Aurelius.

The plots themselves suggest the same quality. Themes familiar to us in the great tragedies—like murder on the grand scale with its full implications

when it breaks into human life, ambition with all the richness of its meaning in *Julius Caesar*, jealousy in the grandeur of the spectacle in *Othello*, frustrated passion for the righting of social wrong like that of *Oedipus*, darting and eternal hate of the kind that made bloody the hands of Guthrun—these are not the themes that Chaucer uses. Something of them he does present in miniature. What he gives us might have had a more profound significance: the story of Virginia dying for chastity might have been told with the proportions of the sacrifice of Iphigenia; even the Griselda plot might have been used to great effect with reference to the peasant's repressed grief. But the poet is partly governed by the scale of values he found in his sources; and partly he seems not to care in all cases for deepening and extending emotional response. Exquisite the stories all are, with perfect touch as with the art of illumination; but each in itself does not give the greatest possible insight into human nature. To get a notion of the poet's own powers in this respect we have to read between the lines in the *Troilus*; and in the *Canterbury Tales* we must put them all together with headlinks and endlinks and the whole drama of the pilgrimage. No, Chaucer had no Promethean idea of himself as snatching divine fire for human enlightenment. Like most medieval authors he is unpretentious. Would he clear the path of life by opening the heavens with the thunder of his verse and bending the majesty of his brow? Not he! The eagle in the *House of Fame* (who calls him familiarly "Geoffrey") hears that he doesn't want to learn about the stars. As a rule Chaucer plays on a fine instrument, and he turns out sonatas. We may easily fail to notice how perfectly they are fashioned. They beguile the time, and that is what youth wants.

If the aged and profoundly wise can enjoy Shakespeare and Milton and Bunyan, you must become as little children to know Chaucer at his best. His jokes, like the one about bribing the God of Sleep with a feather bed, like his fun about his age, his lack of skill in verse, his dullness, his hardships in the clutches of the eagle, the penance exacted from him by the God of Love, and all the rest of it; and then the trickery and turn of his plots in the fabliaux; and then his delights, like that in Alisoun's perfection and the way the Wife of Bath "socked" her husband on the jaw—all these draw young laughter, and we can multiply instances of them almost indefinitely. They are the stuff of his narrative. They make us happy. Yet set beside the picture of Oedipus searching to right the wrongs of Thebes, or Paolo and Francesca swept by the blasts of hell, or Lady Macbeth in the torture of the sleepwalking scene, how trivial Chaucer's enthusiasms appear! Now we can tell why some critics used to call him naïf. Here is a great poet with insight and power playing with trifles, and what is the reason? It is not that like Aristophanes he was set upon a deep and serious purpose with reference to politics or philosophy. It is not that he was given to the irrevocably precious or rococo. The answer is that Geoffrey Chaucer did not address himself to the reader who ponders the issues of life and death. He wrote primarily for youth, youth of whatever age, that loves beauty and believes in life.

His abounding playfulness that appears almost everywhere in his work—in the flight with the eagle, in the tone of the *Troilus*, in the spirit of the quarrel between the Wife of Bath and the Clerk—is something that may appear even irresponsible. I am certain it was this quality that made Arnold deny him

"high seriousness." I sometimes wonder whether Gilbert and Sullivan, Belloc and Chesterton, Charlie Chaplin and some others, really belong to the English. In the great run of satirists in England, such as Dryden, Swift, Pope, Jane Austen, Thackeray, and Meredith, there is a biting, or at least nibbling, quality that is quite foreign to Chaucer's "sympathetic irony." In glancing over Miss Spurgeon's anthology of Chaucer criticism, I observe how many centuries it took for English readers to catch on to the poet's humor, and I see that much of our understanding of it is based on the observations of Kittredge and Manly and Lowes in our own country. One British critic indeed has become slightly irritable in this connection: "We have heard," he exclaims, "a little too much of the 'mocking' Chaucer. . . . I am afraid that many of us now read into [his works] all manner of ironies, slynesses, and archnesses, which are not there. . . ." I do not insist that the British are weak in humor, but they want it well mixed with wit. Also it is annoying after all to hear people laugh at a joke you yourself don't get! This same critic, by the way, remarks as follows: "But Chaucer, whatever we may think of him, was not a 'regular fellow,' *un vrai* businessman, or a Rotarian. He was a scholar, a courtier, and a poet, living in a highly subtle and sophisticated civilization." Much of this is sound. The poet spent many hours alone in his room reading. But some of the time he was at the Custom House and out in the country and on journeys abroad. Whatever he was, wherever he met and talked with ordinary men, he was, I assert with confidence, a "regular fellow."

Was he, then, shallow? If he never seems to make a real effort to plumb the depths of human misery or to scale the heights of mystical vision, does it mean

he lacked the ability to do so? I suggest that temperamentally Chaucer was like many an American: he would tighten his lips with reticence when it came to such matters. That is what I infer from the picture he gives of himself after he listened to the Prioress' story of the little scholar. Like a modern American, too, he releases his emotion in the joke of telling about Sir Topaz, the little jewel of knighthood. But twice at least he does make an elaborate study of human psychology—first, in *Troilus and Criseyde*, and, second, in the Wife of Bath's "Prologue." In the first of these we have the important theme of infidelity considered in the greatest detail. In the second, along with the feminist problem and the discussion of the question as to who shall be the head of the house, we have the far more fundamental study of the meaning of love itself. Here is a superabundant, highly energized woman looking perpetually for the satisfactions of love and thinking to find them in the returns of the flesh. The good wife has had many returns of the flesh but she has never been fully satisfied. Even at the funeral of one husband she is looking for another, and usually has an extra friend or two in the offing besides. At times she has evidently been bothered by her similarity to the woman in the Gospel who loitered at Jacob's Well and who also has had five husbands. The good wife refers to the story and she is troubled about it. What she never even remotely seems to have guessed is that there was the answer to the problem of her whole life. Unlike the romantic hero of a later time who suffers from nympholepsy, she seems less concerned with the search for beauty than for love itself. Now and then coming close to it, as with her fifth husband, she seems almost wilfully to pass it by because she is more intent on what she gets out of

love than on what she gives, and so she betrays it. What did she think of that Love Incarnate, who offered the water of life and promised that he who drank thereof would never thirst again? I suspect that like youth she was proud of her thirst.

Matters of love and loyalty form a considerable part of Chaucer's subject matter. They run through the "Knight's Tale," the "Miller's Tale," the "Reeve's Tale," the "Man of Law's Tale," in fact nearly all the stories. They are fundamental, but they involve issues that youth can readily apprehend and find significant. Even in the portrait of the Wife of Bath they appear in a way to interest youth rather than an audience that would take special pleasure, say, in the latter part of Goethe's *Faust* or *Peer Gynt*, or Bennett's *Old Wives' Tale* or the *Golden Bowl* of Henry James. Chaucer was more likely to entertain his friends with stories, I think, than he was to play with ideas for their own sake. But obviously he did cogitate on certain matters—free will, the significance of dreams, fatalism, human passion in relation to eternal values—and he shows maturity in the detachment with which he can poke fun at his own speculation in these grave matters. He took the trouble to make a complete translation of the *Consolatio* of Boethius and other ponderous works. He read and read again the *Divine Comedy*. He had his own private reflections no doubt. But when, if ever, he comes to speak out, it is not to the wise and prudent, not to the tonsured cleric and specialist, but to those rash persons who have a zest for life itself, whose hair is not too gray and whose brows are unwrinkled.

But has he anything to say to a world that during the six hundred years since his time has seen much water and blood

flow under the bridge? Of course we want ancient culture for our young people: we show them, if we can, the architecture and sculpture and painting of the past: books and slides help them to feel the quality of Chartres Cathedral and Mt. St. Michel as well as that of the Parthenon. And here is a living voice from the Middle Ages, a voice so much like ours that we can catch the overtones and personal mannerisms of the poet's speech, and even tell, we feel sure, when he is smiling. He gives us information about the society of his day and shows us types ranging almost from king to peasant in a motion picture crowded with realistic action. He utilizes the various forms of literature familiar to his contemporaries—the romance, the exemplum, the homily, and all the rest. There are some omissions, religious drama and the mystical vision for example, and I could wish that we had something in his hand like certain passages of Richard Rolle and Walter Hilton. But not much is lacking in his work to make us more at home in the fourteenth century than even the pre-Raphaelites. Furthermore, Chaucer is a genius, let that not be forgotten, and there are competent and learned critics to maintain that as genius, if not as poet, he stands second only to Shakespeare. Whether we can go as far as that or not, we are bound to recognize that he is one of the very great whom we should know at first hand.

But what does he have to say? Well, what do our geniuses have to offer? Something more, I believe, than the pleasure afforded by works of art; something of insight and discernment about life, surely that is the unearned increment of association with the great. More than all this, I am afraid I must add in the language of our forefathers, Chaucer has a "message" for us. He does not

preach, but by his very inclusiveness he does reveal truth. First, he combines our own robust view of life with an idealism we should do well to emulate, and, second, he puts the secular values and ideas of our age, as well as of his, against the background of eternity in a way that is salutary. I suspect he is just the writer for a generation that has abandoned the cult of Matthew Arnold and cannot agree on another prophet. Chaucer begins on the right level, and then he deepens perceptions and extends the view.

In his enjoyment of the good earth at the start, he is perfectly honest. No one can deny that he delighted in the love affair of Troilus and Criseyde and the full-blooded adventures of the Wife of Bath. So genuine, in fact, is all this part of his work that there are modern critics who think that he saw nothing wrong in Criseyde and that the Wife was preaching his own doctrine. But the amazing thing about Chaucer is that he can be of the earth earthy and yet has his heavenly part; he can enjoy his dinner and yet say grace over it. Set the famous lines regarding the Wife's remembrance of her youth against the Prioress' prayer rendered from lines he had learned by heart in Dante, and you have the man's range of understanding. Youth will not distrust the poet who wrote the "Miller's Tale," although it may wonder that he could as truly write of the boy who sang "O alma Redemptoris." If the world of our time inclines to be narrow, in that it finds realism in only one kind of subject matter, let it meet Geoffrey Chaucer and listen to him awhile. More than most he can prepare modern youth for the day when it will take leave of Falstaff and assume a mature responsibility.

But in this use of the secular and the eternal he is not the victim of some kind of interior cleavage. His is a thoroughly

integrated nature. In using the eternal element, he lets it throw light on the secular in a way that reveals its true meaning and its true importance. Everyone recalls the "Epilogue" of the *Troilus* and how, when all passion is spent and the heroine has been unfaithful, the poet takes us with his hero up to the eighth sphere in heaven, from which we look down and get a proper sense of the meaning of love and pleasure in "this little spot of earth." Some critics have disputed this interpretation of the poem; but exactly the same view is offered in the *Parliament of Fowls*, where we begin with the flight through the spheres and later come down to the problems of earthly love. The moral is the same, but I hesitate to put it into words other than those of the poet. Let him who doubts read once more the rest of Chaucer's works, and I think he will come to the same conclusion. All earthly things shall pass. *Sursum corda!* Forth, beast, out of thy stall. Hold the high road, and let thy spirit lead thee. And so we have tales told by the pilgrims of high and low estate regarding rascal and saint, with passion and grief, but at last we come to the Parson's treatise on judgment and redemption. Chaucer is broad on both counts; he is fully aware of the best of both worlds, and yet he has a sense of proportion.

It can never be said, however, that he

is a propagandist. He does not expound dogma or dwell on the world's need of this or that panacea. Twice at least he makes an explicit declaration of his faith—at the end of the *Troilus* and in the well-known ballade where he reminds us that the truth shall make us free. But there is no forcing of the issue. When he says something of religion, it falls simply into place as a part of the sanity of his understanding. Even where something unmodern like social custom or perhaps the miraculous element appears in his work, modern youth is not likely to reject it utterly; it is so often accompanied by living human nature that it can still convey any spiritual truth it may have.

But too often modern readers get only so far as the "General Prologue" and a few of the *Canterbury Tales*. You cannot know Geoffrey Chaucer that way. You must read the early poems and find out that there you have more than stained-glass windows. You must read the *Troilus* and see the moon rise over medieval Troy. You must follow Dorigen and May and discover what it is that grows in gardens. If with Lowell you feel "some-what of the unworn sentiment" of your youth revive in you the process, it will be the more directly for you the poet speaks when he says, "O yonge fresshe folkes, he or she"—and you will realize that he has been leading you along an old road to an eternal shrine.

The English Major in Business

JUSTIN V. EMERSON¹

ASKED by the College Conference on English in the Central Atlantic States to contribute to a discussion of the value of the B.A. degree and, more specifically, the value of the English major as training for a job, Mr. Dexter Keezer, director of the department of Economics of the McGraw-Hill Publishing Company, prepared and sent out a questionnaire which might serve as a basis for his discussion. The questionnaire was answered by the employment managers of nineteen manufacturing companies, seven chemical and gasoline companies, three railroads, four utilities companies, five banks, and three insurance companies.² All these concerns employ large numbers of men;³ the opinions of their personnel managers may, therefore, validly be considered significant.

The questionnaire composed by Mr. Keezer and others consists of eight questions and falls into two parts: one (questions 1-3, 5, and 6) concerned with the English major's chances of being hired relative to the chances of a technically trained man; the other (questions 4, 7 and 8) concerned with his relative chances of progress once on the job. Each question is so worded that it can be answered negatively or positively; some also allow less categorical answers.

¹ Rutgers University.

² Only nine of the fifty companies surveyed ignored the request for information.

³ The original fifty companies employ, among them, 750,000 workers. The forty-one which answered Mr. Keezer's questions employ a total of 424,720.

Thirty-two of the forty-one men who replied answered the questions asked; nine wrote letters instead, explaining that for one reason or another they were unable to answer the questions as asked. Mr. Keezer reported the results of his survey at the meeting of the College Conference on English in New York City in October, 1948. After presenting an analysis of the answers to the questionnaire, he summarized his findings, on the basis of both questions and letters, thus:

The ability to write and speak clearly is of major importance as an element of success in the business world. However, it is not clearly necessary to major in English in order to acquire this ability. Nor is an English major always proficient in everyday written and spoken English. Many companies are inclined to be leery of English majors who have concentrated on creative or literary pursuits. Individuals with the tastes thus reflected would be unhappy, and therefore unsuccessful, in business. Prospective employees who have majored in Economics, Engineering, Business Administration, etc., are often favored, not so much because of what they have learned, but because their choice of major indicates an interest in business.

The ability to think logically and to organize one's thoughts is of major importance. This ability may be acquired by proper training in English as well as in many other subjects.

Character, general intelligence, and initiative are more important keys to success in the business world than any specific range of knowledge unless the knowledge is of a specialized type which must be possessed in order to do a specialized job.

Mr. Keezer drew four general conclusions from his findings. First, none of the businessmen consulted underrated the practical value of the English major or

seemed to consider it of value only to aesthetes. Second, "if any English 'major' does not enjoy an even better reputation for non-specialized employment in business, it is largely because of the sort of people who take such a major rather than the major itself." By this comment Mr. Keezer presumably indicates a truth recognized by all honest English teachers: too many students major in English either because (a) they do not know what else to major in; or (b), having tried another major and done badly, they think English will be easier. Mr. Keezer points out that "one of the best ways to build up the reputation of an English 'major' . . . is to get better students to take it." It might be added that the first step toward building up the English major is to make it difficult enough to discourage lame ducks from enrolling in it.

Third, too many A.B. degrees have been awarded to English majors who have successfully completed their courses without ever acquiring a command of the English language. The accusation cannot be parried; and the blame for such a humiliating state of affairs rests solely on the college English teachers who have not only passed, but given superior marks to, students who could not write clearly and grammatically, to say nothing of forcefully or gracefully.

Finally, Mr. Keezer called for a re-examination of the whole major system, "[originally] designed as a safeguard against a far-flung superficiality." Why, he asks, must an interdepartmental course of study be less rigorous than a course concentrated in one field? His point is well taken. The theory behind the minor field of concentration was, of course, that the minor would prevent the student from becoming too narrowly specialized and would impress him with

the interrelationships between fields of knowledge; thus he would see that seventeenth-century English literature did not appear magically from nothing and exist in a vacuum but was intimately related, in its genesis and in its expression, to seventeenth-century political, religious, and economic thinking. The theory was and is sound. In practice, a student can, in most institutions, avoid a great deal of hard work by selecting a minor so closely allied to his major that he is not really led into other fields of thinking at all. Thus good intention is defeated.

From his data, Mr. Keezer drew conclusions which point, politely but unmistakably, to the need which most college English departments have of reviewing the major that they offer. Forced by the brief time at his disposal to generalize, he ended by shifting his focus from the value of the English major in getting jobs for students to the question of what is wrong with the English major: a logical shift and by no means a change in direction. The answers given Mr. Keezer by the various businessmen who co-operated with him are more significant in their implications than for the exact information which they furnish. Mr. Keezer indeed remarks, in his report, that "... the comments made both by letter and in answering the questionnaire were often more interesting and revealing than the specific answers." Tabulation of all answers to some questions drew a blank, yet examination of the questionnaires and letters reveals states of mind common to most of the writers and reveals very clearly what qualifications they hope to find prospective employees possessed of. Most revealing, curiously enough, are inconsistencies which appear in the answers in almost all the questionnaires.

A realization of certain facts must precede further analysis of available data. Nineteen manufacturing companies, seven chemical and gasoline companies, and three railroads are among the concerns which participated in the survey. The majority of these have small place or none in their organizations for men without specialized training.⁴ Thus the representatives of two of the three railroads polled state flatly that a man without technical training would have no chance of getting a job in their companies; the representative of the third says substantially the same, but more gently. One of these men writes:

In our own department where during the past two years we have employed about fifteen personnel people from outside the railroad, two of them were English majors and had at one time taught English in colleges.

Two is not a large proportion of fifteen; and it should be further noticed that only fifteen men from "outside the railroad" had been hired in two years. In the same way, a manufacturing-company representative states, "Do not have opportunities for English majors." A representative of one of the large oil companies writes that "... because the nature of the oil industry requires us to look chiefly for college graduates with some technical training, we rarely have openings for English majors." As Mr. Keezer notes in his comment on the answers to the first question:

Several companies where employment is limited to technical jobs replied that an English "major" would have the *same* chance to secure non-specialized employment, but qualified this answer by noting that people who had majored in Engineering, Accounting, or Mathematics would have a better general prospect of getting a job with them.

*Mr. Keezer's questions make clear that he is inquiring only about the businessman's attitude toward the filling of positions not requiring specialized training.

It is clear, then, that a good many businesses today have no real place within their organizations for men without technical training in Engineering, Chemistry, or Mathematics. The important point to be made here, however, is that most of the representatives of these same companies went on to answer the questionnaire. This amounts to saying, "I never do consider hiring an unspecialized man, but if by any chance I did, this would be my attitude." One cannot allow great significance to such suppositional answers, however conscientiously considered.

Related to the same problem are the answers to questions 4, 7, and 8, concerning the likelihood of an English major's advancement *once on the job*. Any answer made by an employer who has no positions for English majors must be purely hypothetical. What all this means in terms of evaluating the questionnaires may be made clear by an example. The personnel manager of a manufacturing company in Decatur, Illinois, states that an English major has a better chance to secure nonspecialized employment than a graduate who has majored in another field; that he would most likely be put to work in labor or public relations, personnel management, or sales; that, once on the job, he has a better chance to succeed. The answers are encouraging; and the writer in question is himself an English major who has made good in business. One scarcely notices that the answer to question 2 ("Of the total openings for college graduates you expect over the next year, what percentage could be satisfactorily filled by English majors?") is 2 per cent. Most liberally interpreted, this means that the caliber of English majors must be very high indeed if they are even to win a chance to prove themselves.

In his report, Mr. Keezer notes that the answers to question 2⁵ show a wide spread: "The percentages ran from zero virtually 'by fives' so that a broad general conclusion cannot be drawn." Obviously, most of the businessmen found the question, thought up by a personnel expert, unanswerable; fifteen of them did not try. Yet, there is this to be said: of the twenty-six who did answer, only five named a percentage between fifty and one hundred, one between twenty and fifty; the rest named figures under thirty. The only percentage named by more than three answerers (seven of them) was zero. Whatever the figures mean, they do not indicate any considerable number of jobs available to English majors in heavy industry.

The insurance men and the public utilities men offer more hope to the English major. The representatives of the three participating insurance companies indicated, respectively, that 60, 50, and 60 per cent of the jobs likely to be available in the next year could be filled by English majors. Without statistical tables to draw on, they were unwilling to answer most of the other questions categorically. The three public utilities men answered this question with 30 per cent, 5 per cent, and one refusal to estimate but an admitted preference for English majors. All three point out that certain jobs demand technical knowledge; for the jobs which do not, they prefer men with character and general intelligence; none mentions the college major as an important consideration.

The most interesting and significant answers to the questionnaire came from the five bankers who contributed to the survey, representing large city banks in

New York, Philadelphia, Chicago, and Minneapolis. Four of these men wrote extensive covering letters. Three admit that a high percentage of available jobs in their institutions could be filled by the right man, no matter what his training. They wish to employ college graduates who are energetic, presentable, forceful, of good character, and possessed of wide background. They stress the unlikelihood of a man temperamentally averse to finance succeeding in banking or in any other business. They point out that a man must be able to think clearly and to express his thoughts accurately in speech and writing. The English major ought to be possessed of most, at least, of these attributes. That many are not is incontestable.

Mr. Robert N. Hilkert, vice-president of the Federal Reserve Bank of Philadelphia, states the cases for and against the English major and every other major:

I cannot subscribe to a common view that liberal education in college ought to be adequate preparation for almost any kind of "non-specialized employment." All employment is specialized. As partial evidence, consult the catalogue of any large university and scan a section entitled "Courses in the English Department." Of course, some occupations are more highly specialized than others—Engineering, Chemistry, etc. I have been told by competent authorities, however, that those who major in these technical fields would profit by spending more time minoring in English.

Mr. Hilkert summarizes the position not only of the bankers but of the majority of businessmen. The value of the major is determined by the minor; or more accurately, by the courses which the student elects to take in addition to courses in his major field. If he plans to enter business, he needs to be familiar with economic concepts and to possess at least competence in the practical branches of mathematics. How can he

⁵ Of the total openings for college graduates you expect over the next year, what percentage could be satisfactorily filled by English "majors"?

undertake any job without the latter? Several of the bankers state that specialized training in banking can come later, furnished by the bank or by evening classes at a local university. They wish to employ men of broad background—and they mean broad. As Mr. Hilbert points out, above, a college student can specialize as narrowly—and as disastrously—in literature as he can in chemistry: he will graduate from college fit for one, and only one, job. Such a graduate, unless he has exceptional luck, will have difficulty in getting any job.

The general desire of businessmen to hire college graduates with flexible, clear minds, able to adapt themselves to a changed situation and to meet unexpected problems, appears in questionnaire after questionnaire. The majority listed general intelligence as the most important qualification for success in a new job. A number answered question 7, "Is the man who has taken a broad course in college more likely to land eventually at the top than one who has specialized?" by stating that success would depend on adaptability and initiative.

One last point must be made about the answers to the questionnaire before a summary is undertaken. Question 8 consists of two parts: (A) "If you personally had it to do over again, would you choose a more, or a less, specialized course of education?" and (B) "Would you pay more or less attention to English?" As Mr. Keezer pointed out in his analysis of the answers, fifteen answered Part A with a categorical "More [specialization]," seven with "Less"; in Part B, eighteen answered "More [attention to English]," while only two answered "Less." The full significance of the answers becomes apparent only when it is realized that thirteen men are saying that, had they to go to college all over

again, they would specialize more highly *and* pay more attention to English. The explanation of this apparent inconsistency is simple: these men do not feel that they have sufficient command of language to express their ideas well and forcefully. A number of them complained that most of the young men hired by their firms could not express themselves orally or in writing and were not able to put together a technical report. These are the abilities which businessmen wish colleges to teach their graduates; and they are just the abilities which neither English departments, in general, nor any other departments are teaching.

To summarize: Mr. Keezer's survey supplies highly practical advice both to undergraduates and to English departments. Of necessity, however, the implementing of the advice must be done by the instructors, since the average undergraduate will not spontaneously elect a course which is distasteful to him. The English department must, then, force its majors to broaden their interests and forbid them to enrol exclusively in related courses, i.e., in literature, language, philosophy, and fine arts. Merely going outside the department is not enough. The student must seek his extra-departmental courses in different fields of knowledge—in history, mathematics, the natural and social sciences. This is one way the English department can assist its students to a truly liberal education.

It can also help them in their senior year by pointing out where they are most likely to find jobs. The survey shows that manufacturing companies and chemical and petroleum-products companies have small place in them for men without technical training. They need primarily men who know how to think and to make, not how to think and to talk or

write. Even their salesmen must be mechanically minded enough to understand and appreciate the processes which lie behind the products they sell. If a humanities major secures such a job, he is not likely to be happy in it. On the other hand, the banks and insurance companies and, to a lesser extent, the utilities companies need primarily men who can think and talk or write, not make. Their "salesmen" must understand the business and, in addition, be able to persuade customers that they want the product. These businesses have wide ramifications which set a premium on spacious backgrounds, a large store of general information, and the ability to deal fruitfully with people of all kinds.

The job-seeking English major, then, should look to businesses which necessitate (a) research ending in conclusions (rather than in a process or a mechanical device) and (b) personal dealings between employee and customer. He should shun businesses which will take him into workshop or laboratory and keep him from the customer. Thus, such fields as banking and insurance, already mentioned, advertising, public relations, and journalism are likely to offer opportunities to the well-rounded English major who knows how to express himself.

The English department's responsibilities concern the two kinds of courses that it commonly offers—those in literature and those in writing. The businessmen

polled had little to say about courses in literature, and probably the majority consider them nice but insignificant; but they do value college graduates with broad backgrounds. If the literature courses focus on technicalities—the structure of the various kinds of sonnets, the characteristics of Meredith as a novelist—they will indeed be useless to the average undergraduate from any practical point of view. If, on the other hand, the courses are so constructed and so taught that they illuminate the life of the times with which they deal—what people ate, wore, worked at, played at, and thought—then the literature is seen in proper perspective, as part of social history and as a way of getting at the history of ideas. Such courses cannot but be significant, for literature embraces and ties together all kinds of thought.

As to the writing courses, their goal is obvious. The student, furnished with ideas from reading, must learn to express those ideas. He must be taught to formulate and develop an idea, clothe it in suitable words, and get those words on paper in such relationship to one another that the original idea is apparent to a reader. In addition, the businessmen ask that college English departments teach students how to do one specific task: to compile, sort, and arrange data in such a way that their significance can be seen—in short, to put together a technical report.

English in an Engineering School: A Primary Objective

MENTOR L. WILLIAMS¹

TWENTY years ago I taught my first class of freshman engineers. After an interlude of fifteen years I am again teaching freshman English to engineers and technologists. I use the phrase "English to engineers" rather than "engineering English" because the latter too often suggests that there is a "great gulf fixed" between engineers and other students, especially the liberal-arts students. There are no differences between students in any curricular field other than those resulting from environmental and social backgrounds, and, one must admit, those are significant but not great enough to justify a complete alteration of the freshman course to "fit" the engineer. In one respect, however, the freshman English course in an engineering school should vary from the general pattern. The engineer, because of his strategic position in society, should become acquainted with the broad social implications of the work accomplished by those in his profession.

Twenty years ago I learned that the engineer, the technologist, the "practical" or applied scientist, were little concerned with the social consequences of the efforts to make the world a more comfortable place to inhabit. The bulk of them expected to be usefully employed as either business executives, technical experts, or research assistants in industrial or commercial concerns requiring the special skills they had learned. Man-

agement, construction, research—that would be their job, and they would do it well.

They have not changed. Twenty years ago, those old enough to remember will recall, America was engaged in a great debate over technology and progress. Learned philosophers and students of culture stumped the land proving that man was or was not a machine, the victim or the master of his own mechanical ingenuity. Dean Inge declared that progress, or the idea of progress, was a snare and a delusion. Will Durant in an astoundingly popular lecture, "Is Progress Real?" proved himself a 100 per cent optimist by answering his question with a ringing affirmative. Books reminiscent of Butler's *Erewhon* and Jules Verne's romances reminded us of the pathetic or glorious results in store for man if he did not, or did, learn to control the forces he had unleashed. Henry Ford's *Today and Tomorrow*, Garet Garrett's *Ouroboros*, E. S. Forester's *The Machine Stops*, R. M. Fox's *The Triumphant Machine*, John Gloag's *Artifex*, Gerald S. Lee's *The Voice of the Machines*, Silas Bent's *Machine Made Man*, Charles Beard's *Whither Mankind?*, Stuart Chase's *Men and Machines*, Karel Čapek's *R. U. R.*, Elmer Rice's *The Adding Machine*, Eugene O'Neill's *The Hairy Ape* and *Dynamo*—the engineers smiled but paid scant attention to the hullabaloo. They had experiments to perform, problems to solve, gadgets to perfect.

¹ Illinois Institute of Technology.

Today's young technologist and applied scientist has changed little. He is eager to know how to make things, how to use materials, how to apply forces, how to employ principles; he is quite unconcerned with how to control what he has set in motion. In an age fraught with the gravest consequences that science has yet released upon us, the general run of technical students shrug off the responsibility with the easy assurance that someone else will handle the situation. The warnings and directives of the atomic scientists are ignored as the croakings of a bunch of parlor liberals. The *Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists* lies on the newsstands in the student bookstore unpurchased. As before, two decades ago, there is the same callous indifference to the problem and its meaning to society. Perhaps "callous" is the wrong word; "calious" implies awareness. These students are quite unaware of the social and ethical implications of an age of nuclear energy. They realize, of course, that the atom bomb itself is a serious threat to the survival of civilization. But, for them, that matter is in the laps of the gods and the politicians. What they do not realize is the problem inherent in the use and control of atomic energy as it concerns man's production and use of economic goods. Neither do they comprehend the phase of the problem that involves efficiency and leisure that might be turned to the satisfaction of man's spiritual and creative powers. Is the atomic age to advance the welfare of all the peoples of the world, or is it to enrich the few who will be able to exploit it to their own ends? Has the scientist and technologist any obligation to society to say how and by whom this power shall be used? These are questions the student has not asked himself—and, worse, is not being asked enough by his instructors.

On teachers of English, no less than on teachers of social science and of the technical subjects, rests the burden of awakening the student in the technical college to the role which he plays in our scientific civilization. They rarely do so. Trained as they are, English teachers have a peculiar prejudice against materialism and scientism and a bias toward the philosophical abstractions: truth, beauty, goodness, and "the finer things in life." The engineer, reasons the English teacher, will have no opportunity other than that he gives him to come in contact with the cultural glories of our creative civilization. The English teacher concludes that he must teach the scientist-engineer to appreciate beauty—art, literature, all that fine heritage of the past which but for the grace of God may never pass this way again. Unless he catches from enkindled fires in the classroom the true warmth of inner delight in the humanities, unless he sees the true visions of the supernal realms in the teacher's words, the engineer will be lost to the materialistic world, the egoistic flesh, and the scientific devil. All this is patently true; the English teacher is right—within reasonable limits. But all of man's creative force has not been spent in the creation of music, art, and literature. Structures, too, have their beauty, their rhythm, their expression of man's eternal aspiration. So have machines and the conveniences of modern life—many of them, at least. There are eternal verities to be heard in the lapping waves of impounded waters behind Hoover and Grand Coulee dams as significant to human life as those Sophocles heard long long ago on the Aegean Sea. In short, the humanistically trained English teacher, having a limited concept of the scope and application of humanistic disciplines, seeks to "humanize" the en-

gineer while there is yet time. Humanizing means spiritualizing or de-emphasizing the material world, means awakening the emotions, arousing the imagination, intensifying the perception of truth and beauty. In this process the English teacher has arrived on the field with too little too late.

One of the more important contributions of the humanistic approach to life is its sense of justice, its ethics. The study of literature presumably guides the individual into habits and patterns of evaluation that rest on values inherent in the literature read. The eternal verities are inescapable; read the best literature of the world and the truths therein will make you free, make you a full, well-rounded, "liberal" human being. Such sentiments and teachings are appropriate and true—for those who are free and can choose a course of action compatible with the values learned. Freedom is the essence of democratic humanism. But is the engineer free?

The phrase "captive inventor" is frequently used by the sociologists when they discuss the relation of the applied scientist to the laboratory that capitalizes on the products of his brain. May not the term be widened to include the entire technological area? Is not every scientist, every technologist, actually a captive? The technical class nowhere in modern capitalistic society is able to exercise the slightest control over what it has created, once it becomes the property of the business and industrial world. Only for the short while that an invention, a method, a process, or a technique is the unique possession of its creator does the creator control it. Thereafter he becomes a consultant, a supervisor, a tender, an operator, doing what he is asked to do, performing tasks he is told to perform. When science becomes the

handmaid of business, the subservient relationship is implicit in the term. The engineer may refuse, individually, to follow the dictates of industry; but engineers, as a class, carry out those dictates—to the letter. It is not the technologist's job, so he thinks and so he has been forced to think, to judge the right or wrong of the operation he is employed to perform. His not to reason why, his but to do or die. Like the battalions of labor before them, applied scientists and engineers are considered merely a part of the Army of Industry, the technical corps. Labor, growing conscious of the insecurity and danger that were contained in that analogy, has, through a century of resistance, achieved some measure of freedom. Not so the engineer-technologist; he still loyally serves his general. And he does it willingly. His rewards may be higher—financial gain, social prestige, national recognition—but his soul is bent in such service. He may not judge the narrow motives of industry; he may not question the virtue of profit before human need, of profit before quality, of profit before chicane. Because he is of Gurth's class, he wears the collar of serfdom about his neck. And it matters not if the collar is a white one. Unless he becomes one of the directors of industry—and the engineer frequently does—he has no power to control his work; or, having become one of that group, it is rare for him to break with tradition or expediency and assert his sense of social obligation.

In the basic English course, as much as anywhere else, this awareness of the social impotence of the engineer can be emphasized. No one can deny that the time has arrived when every responsible citizen in this democratic society must act for the interests of the whole society

in the matter of the controlled use of scientific knowledge and techniques. Certainly, no one is in a position to exercise so much power potentially as the technologist. Can anyone object if the English teacher, the person in whom the tradition of the humanistic view of life is supposed to be most deeply ingrained, points out to the student in technology and engineering the plain duty that lies before him? To this end, then, the Eng-

lish teacher in the technical school should use some materials for freshman reading that will enlarge the awareness and consciousness of the engineer's increased obligation to society. The engineer must become socially minded and develop techniques of control.

In the bibliography that follows are listed some of the more important sources from which selections can be drawn for this purpose.

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One View of Freshman English¹

FREDERIC REEVE²

MUCH has been said of the freshman English course, and a great portion of it has been said as though the course were an abstraction—like “love” or “democracy.” The debate concerning the traditional course and the “new” or “modern” communication course has seemed to consider both of these in ideal terms, not as specific realities varying from institution to institution. It does not seem feasible, however, to take a view of required freshman English courses in general. It would seem to me that no abstract rules can be established, simply because institutions and their students and faculties are so varied. The freshman English course can be successful only if it grows from actuality, if its theory is grounded in observable fact; and the same might be said of any discussion. The course can be successful only if it recognizes students as members of a group, created by and responsible to a community. It can be successful only if it is related to the experience, the environment, and the future needs of students.

The philosophy, nature, and methods of a (not *the*) freshman English course then rest upon answers to such questions as these: Who are our students? What are their interests? What other

courses do they or will they take? What work are they going to do, and where are they going to live? What is the nature of our institution, and what functions in the community does it serve? What is the nature of our staff, what is their training, and what are their plans? What is good communication for our students? Only by answering these questions can we evolve a course philosophy and, subsequently, a course which serves real, not ideal, purposes.

At Michigan State College we have been trying to answer these questions for several years. As a result we have developed a course in communication, a course in reading, writing, listening, and speaking which regards these four skills as parts of a single process. “Written and Spoken English,” the communications course, is one of seven courses offered in the Basic College at Michigan State. The basic-college unit is administered by a dean who is co-ordinate in rank with the deans of all the upper schools. Each of the seven departments is responsible for teaching a broad comprehensive course which cuts across usual departmental lines, a course which is intended to be a self-sufficient unit, not an introductory course. The basic courses are planned to provide the student with a general foundation, a common core of educational experience, and to give him an opportunity to choose a field of special interest after exploration of a number of fields

¹ A paper read at the annual convention of the National Council of Teachers of English held November 25-27, 1948, at Chicago.

² Michigan State College.

and in the light of more information about his abilities than he would have received under any former system.

"Michigan State College is a service institution with a strong technical tradition. It has long given emphasis to functional learnings. Through its extension service in agriculture and home economics and by means of other adult educational programs, it has been close to the interests of the people. Its oldest tradition and foremost objective has been to do all in its power to understand the needs of the people and to serve them with a useful educational program."³

The average student at Michigan State is a high-school graduate, a boy or girl who has done some work in farm, shop, or office, who plans to enter a technical field, and who has had a very limited background in language or speech training. Our students vary tremendously, however, in training, experience, and ability, though now that the flood tide of veteran enrolment has ebbed away, the variety is less obvious. It must be further noted that of all who enrol in the college as freshmen only 35 to 40 per cent complete a program of four-year training.

The course in written and spoken English has been planned with these facts in mind. It is obvious that this must be a terminal course; that is to say that it must offer training in writing, reading, speaking, and listening that will, in so far as possible, be definitive for the majority of the students. Most of them will take no further work in these skills. It is equally obvious that this course must be utilitarian; that is, it must consider language in its function as a transmitter of fact and as an incentive to action. Our students in and out of the

classroom will be most concerned with giving and receiving specific information and most subjected to argument (propaganda) while arguing themselves. They will not be concerned with language as an imaginative, interpretative experience or as a decorative one. By its nature, then, the course must exclude instruction in, or appreciation of, imaginative writing (I do not say "creative," since all writing is by its nature creative), aesthetics, *bel canto*, phonetic, oral interpretation, etc. The student's greatest need, from the point of view of this course, is to express himself without ambiguity in a socially acceptable manner, at what Mr. Pooley has called "the homely level." Since the students have for the most part been very inadequately trained in any form of communication, they are unaware, and perhaps should be, of a consistent linguistic lexicon. The terminology of formal grammar is unknown to them. What is desirable, then, is not that they should be subjected to a training that can mean nothing to them but that they should be trained to use their own experience in developing the skills of communication. It is rank traditional foolishness to assume that students cannot read or speak or write. They often can read at a very specialized level (comics in dialect, sports columns), and they can talk to one another in a highly developed jargon that is not learned without practice. It becomes our obligation to begin with what they know, to develop skills only partially learned, and not to impose upon them an entirely new code that they will immediately discard once they are outside the classroom door. At the same time we have an obligation to make them aware of what language habits and what skills are socially acceptable in the world in which they will work and play. The stu-

³ Howard C. Rather, "General Education at a State College with Technological Traditions," *Higher Education*, III, No. 18 (May 15, 1947), 1.

dent who says, as some have, "It don't matter none to me" has made his point, but he is ill prepared to hold down a job worthy of a college graduate. Finally, it is clear that the course in written and spoken English must be a skills course, not a course in a subject matter. While content must remain important, it is the skill that counts.

The course is based upon a general definition of good communication; the word "good" is both weak and ambiguous, so perhaps "adequate" might be considered a more suitable word.

Good communication is that which is clear, socially acceptable, effective, and socially responsible. Communication is clear when it results from an awareness, conscious or unconscious, of the signs of structural meaning (grammatical form and structure); it is clear when it is unambiguous, structurally and lexically, and when it is organized in terms of purpose and intention. Communication is socially acceptable when it is free from readily determined illiteracies and when it is characterized by observation of current and linguistically valid conventions. Communication is socially acceptable when it is acceptable to the community in which the user lives and works. Communication is effective when it is forthright, simple, specific, and adaptable to the audience in intention, tone, meaning, and construction. Communication is socially responsible when it is grounded in observable fact, in honestly contrived opinion, in an awareness of personal and social bias, when it contributes to understanding and harmony among the greatest number in a democratic society.

The objectives of the course are derived from the basic definition. Very briefly stated and without the numerous subheads, they are as follows:

1. Good communication demands a knowledge of how people think.
2. Good communication is adapted to the audience situation.
3. Good communication has a definite, if not a defined, purpose.
4. Good communication must have a central idea or governing theme.
5. Good communication demands the selection of pertinent, adequate, and effective materials.
6. Good communication has a definite pattern of organization.
7. Good communication uses those methods of development which most effectively accomplish the purpose and develop the central idea.
8. Good communication demands a knowledge of the symbolic nature of language and its history.
9. Good communication must meet certain social standards of effectiveness and acceptability.

These are the course objectives, and its organization and content are based upon them.

Students enrol in "Written and Spoken English" normally for three terms of approximately eleven weeks each, five hours per week, for three credit-hours per term. The hours are divided into two single-hour periods for recitation and speech work, one two-hour-period writing laboratory, and one hour of lecture.

The course really consists of four co-ordinated programs. The reading program, which is being extensively altered for next year, has two functions: to develop skill in understanding the printed page and to provide an extension of experience by use of materials which interpret human experience and the contemporary scene. Much of the reading is collateral and is intended to provide a background for the course. The writing program is closely co-ordinated with the speech program. Students both write and speak on the same subject in order to develop an awareness of the likenesses and differences between the two skills. Papers are written in the laboratory under supervision, the outline being developed out of class and the rough and final drafts composed in class. The listening program consists of a number of lectures upon which the student is expected to

take careful notes, developing his skill in organization of material heard and testing his ability to discriminate between the important and the unimportant. These outlines are submitted weekly to instructors. The content of the lectures is closely related to the course, those of the first term dealing with the nature, history, and development of language, those of the second term dealing with mass mediums of communication and research techniques, and those of the third term dealing with the social responsibilities of the writer and speaker.

The first two terms are concerned with the reporting of fact, including concepts of definition and techniques of research. The entire focus of the third term is upon the responsible use of language in a democratic society. Emphasis is placed upon the obligations attendant upon freedom of speech and upon the valid use of communication to bring about changes in an imperfect society. Too many writers and speakers of great skill have no social responsibility whatsoever; the skill required for effective communication is obviously not enough in itself. A communications course needs to stress social responsibility, and our course in particular needs more study of the mediums of mass communication.

Such briefly is the course in written and spoken English.

A word should be said about the staff. The department of written and spoken English is a separate administrative unit, not a part of the English or speech departments; and it has its own department head. We look for teachers whose principal interest is communication, who

are willing to spend their full time at it, and who know that salary raises and promotions depend upon that interest. With a large nucleus of such teachers, a continuity and an intensive development is possible that would not be were the staff continually moving on every two or three years. We do not believe in the three-years-and-out plan, and our course is taught by instructors, assistant professors, and associate professors.

The chief aim of the department is to keep the course realistic. It has been developed in terms of the student's background and needs. The work is constantly related to his own experience and to his own abilities as well as to other work in the basic college. The student is not encouraged to become an orator; he is urged to learn to speak naturally and with dignity and force. He is not asked to imitate great masters of prose; he is encouraged to write with simplicity—clearly, graphically, specifically, and forthrightly.

We believe that communication is a social process, not an abstract mental exercise, a skill learned in a vacuum. It is important for us as teachers to remember that the classroom is too often an unreal situation, in which the student is asked to act in a fashion totally unrelated to his own experience or environment. If we remember the essentially social nature of the communication process, if we stress its use and function in society, we can perhaps bring the world into the classroom and bridge the gap between a course in English composition and the real world, in which language is a function, a tool, and a weapon of men.

Round Table

AN INTERNATIONAL LITTLE RED SCHOOLHOUSE

One of the vital problems of the modern educator is the promotion of greater understanding among the nationality groups which may come under his guidance. As a member of the English department of Bowling Green State University I have had the opportunity to formulate a program which has such understanding as its major objective.

Because of its rapid expansion Bowling Green State University has attracted an increasing number of students from widely divergent foreign nations. The result has been a cosmopolitan group which at times may include representatives of France, Germany, Greece, Iran, Norway, Panama, and Peru. While not all classes are so diverse, there is not a sufficient number from any one country to make possible the formation of a homogeneous class. Therefore, it has been necessary to establish a highly flexible course in English composition adjustable to the needs and backgrounds of the members enrolled.

The first step in the interesting process of establishing the requirements of each student is the personal interview which furnishes a general impression of the linguistic difficulties and accomplishments of the individual. Through questions about previous training and experience it is frequently possible to determine whether a student needs to enter a special course for foreign students.

When this need has been established, the second step, that of more accurate placement, is begun. James Wright, director of the psychology clinic, has found the non-verbal portions of the Wechsler Bellevue Performance Scale very valuable in determining the potential ability of the student. The resulting intelligence quotients have proved satisfactory for work at college level

in all but a few cases. This indicates that speedy removal of language handicaps is desirable so that the student may make gainful use of the time spent in the university.

The final step in clarifying the individual language problem is referral to the education clinic, which is under the supervision of Miss Martha Gesling. Each student is given three tests: an oral reading test, a vocabulary test, and a rate-of-comprehension test, based upon material which is not too difficult. The tests are given individually when possible, and the scores are interpreted in terms of grade placement, thus facilitating the choice of reading material for the student.

With the assistance of these departments, the class, which of necessity differs each semester, is ready to be formulated. It meets for fifty minutes three times weekly, with each period being devoted to a different type of remedial or constructive activity. All sessions are conducted in English, and the student is urged to think as well as to speak in English at all times.

The first class meeting of the week is given over to discussion, grammatical practice, and some lecture. The students keep notebooks, in which they record puzzling expressions and constructions. All these, including campus slang, are clarified, and the desirability of usage is indicated. In first-semester sessions the students use this period for grammatical study based upon *Foundations of English for Foreign Students*, compiled by Hugh H. Walpole and published by the University of Chicago Press. In second-semester classes simplified lectures on theory and types of composition are presented, reinforced with extensive use of material from books and magazines of intermediate level. A portion of this period may be devoted to private discussion and criticism of papers which have been revised.

During these conference periods it is possible to solve many of the small problems of usage which vary so in the individuals.

One of the most valuable parts of the course is the laboratory period, during which the students practice the grammar and theory of composition which they have studied. The writing is usually done in class, where advice and assistance can be given. As the class becomes more at ease in the English medium, papers may be written outside class and read aloud and criticized during the class period. An effort is made to associate all theme topics with interests which have been disclosed in discussion of reading or in conversation. The greatest enthusiasm is shown when the widely diversified group is asked to give personal experiences or reactions to, and impressions of, life in the United States.

This grasp of a realistic picture of the United States is one of the chief objectives of the course, and trial has proved that *Reader's Digest* (with the College Supplement) provides material which best satisfies the differing abilities and interests of the class. In first-semester classes very short assignments with stress upon concrete vocabulary are in order, while the more advanced students read more and deal with relative and abstract words which they can put to use in their own writing. If there is a marked diversity in reading rate, the more advanced students read longer articles, which they condense into class reports for the benefit of the slower students. The opportunity to discuss current problems and to have their opinions respected, even though the expression is faulty, helps to compensate for the disappointments encountered in the struggle to adopt a new medium of expression.

In order to give every class member a feeling of accomplishment, a collateral-reading program has been set up which has been enthusiastically received by the students. The library of the teacher-training school has been made available to this group, providing material which is neither too difficult nor too childish. There a German girl may find her beloved fairy tales, a Greek boy

may read the myths of other countries as he rediscovers his own, or a Panamanian whose reading rate is slow may experience the eternal youth of *Peter Pan*. Nothing is more rewarding than the student's pleasure at "actually reading a whole book" and telling the story again in a private conference.

It is obvious that the standards of such a course must have a certain flexibility to provide for more rapid progress as such a need develops. Often, as a student becomes adjusted to a new life, he displays linguistic ability which may permit special examination and advancement to second-semester work or, in rare cases, into a regular composition class. If possible, the student is retained in the special class where he may have the benefit of individual instruction while an adjustment is made in the amount and difficulty of reading material and in the caliber of composition.

Although this special course in *English for Foreign Students* has existed in its present form for only two years, the results seem quite satisfactory. In advanced literature courses progress of foreign students has been more rapid and less frustrating than it would have been had there been no treatment of their individual problems. While there is no accurate measurement of carry-over to other fields of study, it is certain that increased ability to understand and to use the English language has enriched the learning experience of these visitors to the Bowling Green campus.

ALMA J. PAYNE

BOWLING GREEN STATE UNIVERSITY

"W'ERE," "W'EN," "W'Y,"
"W'ICH," "W'AT"

Thomas Pyles's article "Linguistics and Pedagogy" in April *College English* is really more than I can bear without a protest. On pain of being classed as a "school-marm," I must speak my mind.

¹[Kenyon and Knott's *Pronouncing Dictionary of American English* in its regular vocabulary gives

"It's me," I will suffer gladly. "Who did you ask for?" I admit may be logically, if not grammatically, explained. I will grant that "he don't" has distinguished usage to support it, and I assert boldly that the double negative, which Mr. Pyles describes as "low," has been used by better men than he—or I. But at "w'ere," "w'en," "w'y," "w'ich," and "w'at" I draw the line.

For many years I have gone up and down in the land ("like Satan," Mr. Pyles may retort), and I have yet to hear a man or woman of culture who fails to pronounce the aspirate at the beginning of these words. College graduates—yes! But the two species are, unfortunately, not identical. There are too many college graduates in these days who seem unable to shed the speech habits acquired during a childhood spent among the unlettered, as witness the radio announcer who last Sunday evening discoursed enthusiastically about the "seraphims."

I am quite willing to grant that a man may enter the Kingdom of Heaven without an *h* in his entire vocabulary. But a college classroom is different! When an instructor enters the latter and leaves his aitches behind, his students should make the place too 'ot to 'old 'im.

MABEL Y. SPEARS

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A BASIS FOR GRADING THEMES

"Which would you give the better grade—a technically correct paper which has very slight content or a richly thought paper which is technically poor?" This question was asked during a discussion at the Conference on Freshman Courses in Composi-

only the [hw] pronunciation, but in paragraphs 25 and 112 of the Introduction says that, while [hw] is the general American pronunciation, "many" speakers omit the [h] and that this omission grows more common, probably through the influence of southern British. Apparently Kenyon and Knott regard this as a borderline case.—EDITOR.]

tion or Communication last April and was never directly answered.

To an editor the answer seems obvious. When an editor receives a manuscript with little in it, he returns it as politely and kindly as he knows how; he does not consider it worth *anything*. On the other hand, when he gets a poorly organized or illiterate manuscript with important ideas or facts, he is interested. If there are only a few illiteracies or infelicities, he may try to mend them. More often he frankly suggests that the good content deserves a better style. (This statement is sometimes disguised or softened, for the editor is usually dealing by mail with the author of the manuscript. The suggestion, however, *must* be made.) If the proposed article is badly organized, the editor suggests—tactfully, if possible, but clearly—how he thinks it can be profitably reorganized.

In the editorial office, then, empty perfection instantly gets an *F*. A manuscript with good content but imperfect form does not get any grade—only a comment that the content is good but that its dress needs to be tidied up or remodeled. Some manuscripts go back for revision as many as three times. Then those that are successful get praise, which is the life-equivalent of a grade; publication, which corresponds to credit; and possibly fan mail, for which the school analogue—unfortunately rare—is classmates' concurrence in or disagreement with the ideas expressed.

The case of business letters and other practical writing is somewhat similar. Empty speech or writing, even though flawlessly correct, certainly fails—gets the world's cool *F*. The speech or letter with good content imperfectly phrased or badly organized never accomplishes all that it might—and usually does not fail utterly—that is, it never earns an *A* and rarely falls to *F*. Similarly test papers and classroom impromptus may well be graded on their effectiveness—on the impact of their content as transmitted by their form.

W. WILBUR HATFIELD

Current English Forum

HAROLD B. ALLEN, ADELINE C. BARTLETT, MARGARET M. BRYANT (chairman)

JAMES B. MCMILLAN, KEMP MALONE, RUSSELL THOMAS

"VAGUE" REFERENCE OF *WHICH*, *THAT*, AND *THIS*

Some prescriptive English textbooks are still saying (and so, I am afraid, are some teachers of English) that it is "incorrect" to use *this*, *that*, or *which* to refer to a preceding clause or sentence. Teachers underline such usage in student papers and write in the margin "Vague ref." I must admit that it is easier to underline and scrawl a symbol than to write in the margin "See me" and later devote a half-hour or so to telling the student the facts. And everyone knows that students do not listen to general discussion in class as they do to personal criticism in conference. But teachers now have at their command such studies as Pooley's *Teaching English Usage* and Marckwardt and Walcott's *Facts about Current English Usage*. They also have Curme's *Syntax* and some good handbooks (e.g., Perrin's) and some good grammars (e.g., Bryant's). So, although I must admit further that it is easier to stress a universal than to discriminate and choose, it no longer seems justifiable, if it ever was, to go on teaching things that are not true and never were.

That it is "incorrect" to use *this*, *that*, or *which* to refer to a preceding clause or sentence is surely one of the things that never have been true. The Leonard survey (p. 106) has two examples: 1. "I have no prejudices, and *that* is the cause of my unpopularity" (21: established); 2. "I went immediately into the banquet room, *which* was, I found later, a technical error" (47: established). Marckwardt and Walcott (pp. 23-24) put both examples in a group "distinguished from the class of 'usually condemned' usages; . . . items that can scarcely be said to involve grammatical problems at all. . . .

The judges divide, for the most part placing them in the accepted literary category (38.4 per cent) or in the cultivated colloquial group (54.9 per cent). . . . The ultra-stylistic nature of these problems, together with the significant expression of the judges upon them, should surely establish the group as relatively unimportant for classroom emphasis." Marckwardt and Walcott, therefore, do not include these problems in later ratings. It is not so obvious to all teachers as it is to Pooley (p. 24) that "the literary level cannot be made a requirement for all students in schoolroom composition. It is too much the product of mental maturity and highly developed skill to be attainable by the average student, or indeed by the average teacher." But surely, if it were obvious and if students were "expected to do no more [and no less?] than to cultivate the clear, direct English of communication, together with the feeling for the appropriateness of word and idiom to the purpose intended," teachers of English, and even teachers of other subjects, would feel less frustration; and, what is more important, students would use better English and use it more readily.

Perrin's *Index* says: "Informally, *which* refers to the preceding clause"; and "*That* (or *this*) is used to refer to the whole idea of a preceding statement when the reference is clear." It is worth while here to quote Fries, "Usage Levels and Dialect Distribution" (*American College Dictionary*, p. xxviii): "The usage of our better magazines and of public addresses generally has, during the past generation, moved away from the formal and literary toward the colloquial." Curme's *Principles and Practice of English Grammar* (Barnes & Noble, 1947) includes

(p. 14) among examples of relative pronouns: "*He is rich, which* I unfortunately am not." Curme adds: "The antecedent in the last example is the whole principal proposition" (see also Curme, *Syntax*, pp. 40, 226). It would be tedious to cite other linguists and descriptive grammarians.

Instead, I shall quote from one day's reading, chosen for quite other purposes.

Barbara Ward, *The West at Bay* (Norton, 1948), page 248: "But if the British Treasury were to make sterling convertible in this way . . . it would simply find its own reserves of gold and dollars melting away. And this in fact is what has happened." Page 273: "The free man can choose. This, too, is of the essence of freedom." *That* is so used on page 270, and there are probably other examples on pages I had already read.

Aldous Huxley, "Death and the Baroque" (*Harper's*, April, 1949), page 83: "The heirs of popes and princes laid out huge sums . . . on monuments whose emphatically Christian theme is the transience of earthly greatness and the vanity of human wishes. After which they addressed themselves with redoubled energy to the task. . . ." Page 83: "The lustful and the intemperate, on the contrary, are condemned by all—even by themselves (which was why Jesus so much preferred them to the respectable Pharisees)." There is another such *which* on page 84.

Within twenty-five pages of F. R. Leavis' *The Great Tradition* (George W. Stewart, n.d.) I found three examples of *this* referring to a preceding clause or sentence—one each

on pages 79, 80, and 98—and one quoted from George Eliot on page 83. I found one example of *that* so used on page 82. I cannot believe that anyone, however pedantic, would call Miss Ward's, Mr. Huxley's, or Mr. Leavis' style "colloquial" or "familiar" in a derogatory sense.

A few days ago Angela Thirkell addressed a presumably educated group at Columbia University. Among the many delightful things Mrs. Thirkell said was this: ". . . in 1836, when he already—which surprised me—had a great reputation as a playwright." Even more delightful was the fact that Mrs. Thirkell neither blushed nor apologized for her "substandard" English.

Other examples of this sort could be gathered by the score from equally impeccable sources. Whatever the prescriptive-minded may feel about Messrs. Huxley and Leavis and Miss Ward and Mrs. Thirkell for doing what they like to call "letting down the bars"—the prescriptive-minded, as a rule, have no idea who put up those bars—and "tossing English grammar into the discard," they should think twice before condemning the usage of such competent writers and the work of such competent linguists as Perrin and Pooley and Marchwardt and Curme. A construction is not "incorrect" merely because constant lazy repetition of that construction is tiresome and ineffective even when it is unmistakably clear. A rhetorical value is not a matter of grammatical "correctness."

ADELINE COURTNEY BARTLETT

HUNTER COLLEGE

In *Good King Charles's Golden Days* Bernard Shaw makes Kneller say: "It is a strange fact, your Majesty, that no living man or woman can endure his or her portrait if it tells the truth about *them*." [Italics ours.]

National Council of Teachers of English

Elections

Members of the College Section of the NCTE, voting by mail in May, chose as members of the College Section Committee, James F. Fullington, Ohio State University, Theodore Hornberger, University of Minnesota, and James B. McMillan, University of Alabama. At the close of the Thanksgiving convention of the Council they will succeed J. Paul Leonard, San Francisco State College, Tremaine McDowell, University of Minnesota, and Porter G. Perrin, University of Washington. The holdover members of the Section Committee are: Margaret M. Bryant, Brooklyn

College, chairman; Walter Blair, University of Chicago; George B. Parks, Queens College; and Charlton G. Laird, University of Nevada. The same election placed Henning Larsen, University of Illinois, and George S. Wykoff, Purdue University, on the NCTE Board of Directors as representatives of the College Section. The following Section representatives on the Board hold over: H. L. Creek, Purdue University, John W. Dodds, Stanford University, Merritt Y. Hughes, University of Wisconsin, and Louise M. Rosenblatt, Brooklyn College.

Proposed Amendments to the Constitution

1. *Proposal:* That in paragraph 2 of the part of Article VI headed "Officers of the Council" the sentence "No member elected to the Nominating Committee two consecutive years shall be eligible for re-election until two years have passed" be replaced by the sentence "No one shall serve as chairman of the Nominating Committee two years in succession or as a member more than twice in any consecutive four years."

2. *Proposal:* That the Annual Business Meeting be abolished and its remaining functions given to the Board of Directors. This involves the six following amendments:

A. That in Article VI, Paragraph B, providing for election of directors-at-large, be deleted.

B. That in Article VI, Paragraph C, sentence 1, "nine" be substituted for "six" and "three" for "two." And that sentence 2, "In the beginning two shall be elected for three years, two for two years, and two for one year," be deleted. (This would increase the number of directors elected by Sections to compensate for the abolished directors-at-large.)

C. That in Article VI, Paragraph D, part 2, the clause "except in so far as the Council may by vote limit powers" be deleted.

D. That in Article IX, paragraphs 1, 2, and 3, "convention" be substituted for "meeting." In paragraph 1, sentence 2, "Special Meetings may be called at any time by the Executive Committee, or by petition, filed with the Secretary, of 10 per cent of the membership of the Council," be deleted.

E. That in Article XI (Amendments), paragraph 1, sentence 1, "Board of Directors" be substituted for "Council"; that "of the Council" be inserted after "given to each member"; and that "by two-thirds of all the Directors if the vote is by mail" be substituted for "by two-thirds of those participating in a mail ballot submitted to the members of the Council."

F. That in Article XI, paragraph 2, "Board of Directors" be substituted for "Council."

Reason: The Annual Business Meeting has seemed to have little to do in the last few years. Its last two sessions have been devoted chiefly to debating its own abolition, but no vote was taken either time because no amendment had been submitted to the members of the Council a month before the meeting. A reduction of the number of meetings in the crowded convention schedule would be helpful.

Thirty-ninth Annual Meeting of the National Council of Teachers of English

*Statler Hotel, Buffalo
November 22-26, 1949*

★

CONVENTION THEME: *ENGLISH FOR EVERY STUDENT*

★

PROGRAM

THURSDAY, NOVEMBER 24

MEETING OF THE BOARD OF DIRECTORS, 9:30 A.M.-3:00 P.M.

(All members of the Council are invited to attend the Board meetings)

ANNUAL BUSINESS MEETING, 3:00-4:00 P.M.

(All members of the Council are urged to attend this meeting)

CONTINUOUS EXHIBIT OF MATERIALS AND AIDS FOR TEACHING

RECEPTION FOR MEMBERS, 4:30-6:00 P.M.

GENERAL SESSION, 8:00-10:00 P.M.

Presiding, Luella B. Cook, Minneapolis Public Schools; Second Vice-President of the Council

Welcome—Robert T. Bapst, Superintendent of Schools, Buffalo

Welcome—Oliphant Gibbons, Supervisor of English, Buffalo; Chairman of the Local Convention Committee

President's Address: "Beyond Fancy's Dream"—Marion C. Sheridan, New Haven High School

Reading and the Study of English—Edward S. Noyes, Chairman, Board of Admissions, Yale University; English Department, Yale University; Chairman, College Entrance Examination Board

The Art of Plain English—Mark Neville, John Burroughs School, St. Louis, Missouri; First Vice-President of the Council

FRIDAY, NOVEMBER 25

Instead of the usual general session on Friday morning, three meetings on language will be held under the general headings of "The Linguistic Process," "The Role of Language in the Development of Personality," and "The Process of Socialization through Language."

The Friday-afternoon sessions will be divided into two series. The first (2:15-3:30 P.M.) will have for its general topic "Our Resources." Sectional meetings will be held on "Correlation of Literature with Other Arts," "New Insights into Literature as Revealed by Research," "Audio-Visual Aids to Learning," "Utilizing the Resources of the Community,"

"Improving the Learning Environment," "Drawing upon the Resources of Research in Other Fields," and "Improving the Technique of Teaching."

The second series (3:45-5:00 P.M.) will have to do with "Our Problems." Sectional meetings will be held on "How Should Textbooks Be Chosen?" "How Shall English Function in a Whole School Program?" "What Kind of Person Does the Teaching of English Call For?" "What Commitment Should the NCTE Make in Relation to the Teaching of Grammar and Usage for the Guidance of Teachers throughout the Country?" "How Can Parents and Laymen Be Wisely Kept Informed about Changes in the English Curriculum?" "How Can the Principles of Readiness Be Applied to All Aspects of Language Learning?" "How Should Controversial Issues Be Taught?" "What Should Be the Contribution of English Teachers to Training in Precise Thinking?" "What Answers Shall We Give to Those Who Say That English Is Only a Tool Subject?" and "How Does the Development of the Community College Affect Curriculum Patterns and the Demand Placed upon Teachers of English?" The meetings in the second series will all be discussion meetings.

ANNUAL DINNER, 6:30 P.M.

Toastmaster, Lennox Grey, Chairman, Department of the Teaching of English and Foreign Languages, Teachers College, Columbia University
What Makes a Novel—Edward Weeks, Editor of the *Atlantic Monthly*
Folk Songs—Camille Nickerson, speaker, singer, composer, pianist

SATURDAY, NOVEMBER 26

Elementary, high-school, and college sectional meetings will be held 9:30-11:30 A.M. The program for the College Section follows:

Topic: PRESENT NEEDS IN THE TEACHING OF LITERATURE

Presiding, Margaret M. Bryant, Brooklyn College, Chairman of the College Section of the Council

Secretary, James F. Fullington, Ohio State University

Needs in the Graduate School—Carlos Baker, Princeton University; Chairman of Committee on Literature for the Senior College and Graduate School, Curriculum Commission

Needs in the Senior College—Roy P. Basler, Peabody College for Teachers; Member of Committee on Literature for the Senior College and Graduate School, Curriculum Commission

Needs in the First Two Years of College—Louise Rosenblatt, New York University; Chairman of Committee on Literature for First Two Years of College, Curriculum Commission

Questions and Comment from the Floor

Section Business Session

ANNUAL LUNCHEON, 12:15 P.M.

Presiding, Marion C. Sheridan, President of the Council

Presentation of Radio Awards—Leon C. Hood, Clifford J. Scott High School, East Orange, New Jersey; Chairman, NCTE Committee on Radio

Response

Living English—Problems of the Spoken Words on Records—Edward Tatnall Canby, NCTE Committee on Recordings, commentator on records, *Saturday Review of Literature*

Hyacinths and Biscuits—Carl Sandburg, poet, writer of juveniles, biographer, novelist

MEETING OF THE EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE, 4:00-6:00 AND 8:00-10:00 P.M.

Report and Summary

THE NATIONAL COUNCIL OF TEACHERS of English was one of sixty-five organizations which participated in a Conference on the Role of Colleges and Universities in International Understanding held under the auspices of the American Council on Education with the financial assistance of the Edward W. Hazen Foundation and the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace. The place was Estes Park, and the date June 19-22.

The purposes of the Conference were, first, to re-examine and define the responsibilities of colleges and universities toward international understanding and, second, to translate into practical terms the values these institutions mean to represent and to realize in world affairs. Nine committees studied the services which individual schools and their surrounding communities could render to make the exchange of peoples—students, teachers, and other citizens—most profitable in building international understanding. These committees were concerned with planned initiative, on the individual campus and in its community, for the orientation of exchange persons from foreign countries, for utilization of the values they are capable of contributing to our understanding, and for interpreting to them our culture at its best.

Consideration dealt with co-operation in the programs and policy-making of governmental, intergovernmental, and voluntary agencies and with the selection and preparation of citizens of this country for study and service abroad. There was discussion also of the utilization of intercollegiate organization within the United States to further this end and of the plan for an international association of universities to promote world-wide co-operation for international understanding.

It was the conviction of the Conference

that the program of general education of an institution of higher learning not only should include information about the diverse cultures of the world and about international organization and action but also should seek the cultivation of sensitivity to world problems and the examination of values basic to world understanding. Recognizing the potential contributions of all other fields, the Conference agreed that there remains a distinctive body of knowledge which is necessary for a full understanding of the world today, a field which might be designated by the term "international affairs." The Conference was convinced that a basic course in international affairs should be provided as a part of the general-education offering of higher institutions and that all students should be encouraged to take it, regardless of their fields of specialization.

There was discussion also of the possibility of setting up a nonvocational concentration in the international field which might serve as a major program of study. This is a field of concentration at least as difficult as that provided by any of the more traditional disciplines and should be so recognized by the academic world.

The teachers of English have extraordinary opportunity to contribute to a program of international understanding through their study of literature and its expression of basic philosophies and through the study of language. The promotion of world understanding will utilize the speech techniques of drama, discussion, debate, interview, and public speaking which form a part of the college English program.

Full report of the Conference will be published by the American Council on Education in the early fall.

The National Council of Teachers of English was represented at the Conference by its president, Marion C. Sheridan, and by the

chairman of the Committee on International Contacts, Ruth G. Strickland, who was named chairman of the editorial committee of the Conference.

Miss Sheridan, Director of Public Relations Harold A. Anderson, and Director of the Commission on the English Curriculum Dora V. Smith, also represented the Council at the May annual meeting of the American Council on Education, of which the NCTE is a Constituent Member.

"COMMUNISM AND ACADEMIC Freedom" is the topic of the "American Scholar Forum" in the summer issue of the *American Scholar*. The first item is a factual résumé of the dismissal of three professors of the University of Washington and the placing of others on probation. Then follow statements by the president who dismissed the three men and by each of them. Arthur O. Lovejoy, a chief founder of the AAUP, writes in support of the president, Max Lerner against him, T. V. Smith for him, Helen M. Lynd in condemnation. Do not the iron discipline and published principles of the Communist party preclude a member's teaching without injury to democracy? Yet if a college professor can be dismissed for his opinions—the professors' teaching was not criticized—where will interference with academic freedom, or any freedom, stop? The thorny problem is important and may easily become central for all teachers.

THE "NEW CRITICS" HAVE BEEN very voluble in the first half of 1949. The Warren and Wellek *Theory of Criticism* was advertised by the publisher (not the authors) as the "dreadnought of the New Criticism." It has been followed by William Van O'Connor's *Sense and Sensibility in Modern Poetry* and Donald A. Stauffer's *The Golden Nightingale* (W. B. Yeats). O'Connor's book is typical New Criticism, and the others are of different degrees of purity.

In June came an explosion of opposition, touched off by the Bollingen Award for Poetry to Ezra Pound for the *Pisan Cantos*. Much of this book was written while Pound was

a United States Army prisoner in Italy charged with treasonous broadcasting for Mussolini during the war. He has never been tried because, when returned to this country, he was adjudged insane and committed to an asylum.

The Bollingen Foundation is an offshoot of the Mellon Foundation. The jury of award is a group known as the Fellows of the Library of Congress in American Letters. The present members are well-known and respected writers: Leonie Adams, Conrad Aiken, W. H. Auden, Louise Bogan, T. S. Eliot, Paul Green, Katherine Anne Porter, Karl Shapiro, Allen Tate, and Robert Penn Warren. Paul Green and Karl Shapiro opposed the award to Pound.

The Fellows announced that, although objections might be made "to awarding a prize to a man situated as Mr. Pound," nevertheless "to permit other considerations than that of poetic achievement would destroy the significance of the award and would in principle deny the validity of that objective perception of value on which any civilized society must rest." But some passages in the *Pisan Cantos* seem to be anti-democratic, Fascistic. Objectors not only condemned the art-for-art's-sake attitude of the jury but felt that for a group associated through the Library of Congress with our national government to make an award "for the highest achievement in American poetry in 1948" to an expatriate American now under indictment for treason was utterly inexcusable.

Angriest and most savage perhaps is Robert Hillyer, himself a Pulitzer Prize poet. He contributes two lead articles to the *Saturday Review of Literature* (June 11 and 17) entitled "Treason's Strange Fruits" and "Poetry's New Priesthood." The first reviews the facts related to the Bollingen Award, which Hillyer flatly proclaims a disgrace. In it he also assesses the *Cantos*, which in his opinion "are so disordered as to make the award seem like a hoax. If they are poetry at all, then everything we have previously known as poetry must have been something else." He believes that T. S. Eliot wielded

the most influence in giving the prize to Pound and states unequivocally that both Pound and Eliot, and Eliot especially, have a strangle hold on American poetry through the so-called "new criticism." He develops this further in his second article, in which he considers "what elements in modern American poetry and criticism are sufficiently stagnant to serve as breeding places for influences so unwholesome." His conclusions are that the sterile pedantry of the New Aestheticism, based on a sense of personal inadequacy, and its failure to command our common English, "result in a blurring of judgment both aesthetic and moral." Nothing can atone for the Bollingen Award, but "the future may profit if the award has rung down the curtain on the inglorious Age of Eliot with all its coteries and pressure groups." Norman Cousins, editor of the *SRL*, and Harrison Smith, president of its board, publish in the issue of June 11 a signed editorial supporting Hillyer's statements, and themselves protest the award.

SRL for July 2 carries on the editorial page a statement by Luther Evans, Librarian of Congress, in answer to Hillyer's implied criticism of the Library of Congress. The Fellows are appointed by the Librarian. The Librarian, though he did not approve their decision, feels that for him to overrule his jury of experts would be wrong. He says incidentally that a Fellow of the Library of Congress does not have to be a citizen and asserts flatly that he thinks T. S. Eliot well fitted to perform the numerous services asked of the Fellows. He insists, too, that the total participation of the Bollingen Foundation was to give the Library money for the prize. (Perhaps if Mr. Evans had been choosing a jury just for the Bollingen Award, he would have invited a somewhat different personnel! The Fellows had already been appointed.)

As might be expected, the "new" critics and poets have leaped to the defense of the jury's decision. Among them is Hayden Carruth, the new editor of *Poetry: A Magazine of Verse*. He declares in an editorial in the June issue that he "agrees wholeheart-

edly with the judges' choice." He then continues: "I think that, in spite of the stipulation that the prize would be given for the best book of poems published in 1948, the judges were honoring the whole work of the poet whom nearly all of us would have to nominate as the single living person who has done the most to explore and develop the technical capacities of poetry in English."

Nevertheless, the groundswell of reaction against the "new poetry" had already crept into the pages of *Poetry* itself in the April issue. There Gilbert Neiman, once poet, now novelist, in a confession entitled "To Write Poetry Nowadays You Have To Have One Foot in the Grave," admits that he deserted poetry for prose because "modern English poetry seems to me to have defined itself as preeminently a parlor game. Eliot invented it. Auden and MacNeice have polished it, but their refinements have seldom improved upon Eliot's own." The umbilical cord between the new poetry and the new criticism he suggests by his statement: "I find, reading a modern poem in English, that I am expecting to pick up another magazine shortly and come across the poet explaining his poem by writing a criticism of somebody else's poetry." And again he remarks: "The poet does not speak for himself, but in the name of something: *the poem does not stand by itself*. Always you expect an essay around the corner."

But a change seems to be coming. Even Stephen Spender, for example, in a recent lecture at Hunter College, is reported to have predicted that "less obscure and more conventional poetry will be written during the next decade." Again, the *Quarterly Review of Literature*, entering its fifth year, announces an important policy change thus: "Disturbed by the growing assumption that this, a non-creative period, is best devoted to criticism, the *QRL* feels it of prime urgency, precisely if this assumption be espoused, to do what it can to encourage creative work, especially among young writers. We intend, therefore, to devote our pages to poetry, drama, and fiction. However, we will continue to devote one issue each year

to a creative and critical study of one significant but inadequately known or understood author." Even more direct action has been taken by the formation of The Lyric Associates, Inc., a Foundation for Traditional Poetry, established by Virginia Kent Cummins of New York City. The main purpose of this organization is "to encourage and foster simplicity, clarity and discipline in the writing of traditional poetry that has meaning, music, and emotion." The Foundation's first award of \$1,000 has been made to Robert Hillyer. And there may be further indication that the traditionalists are regaining ground in the announcement that, in September, Robert Hillyer will join the faculty of Kenyon College, headquarters of John Crowe Ransom, Allen Tate, Ivor Winters, and the *Kenyon Review*!

The Pulitzer Prize for poetry, almost forgotten in the turmoil over Pound, went to Peter Vierék for *Terror and Decorum*. The Pulitzer winner in drama is Arthur Miller's *Death of a Salesman*, which also received the New York Critics' Circle award. The Pulitzer Prize for fiction was given to James Gould Cozzens for *Guard of Honor*.

Meanwhile the row over the Bollingen Award to Ezra Pound and Robert Hillyer's subsequent attack on the New Critics continues. Hayden Carruth, editor of *Poetry*, takes three pages in his August number to blast Hillyer's careless quotation and illogical inferences—or insinuations. At more length, he defends the New Poets, insisting that the best poets of many periods have been bitterly attacked by the dull and lazy because their innovations required keen and energetic readers. He asserts but does not, of course, attempt in his small space to *prove* that the difficulty and obscurity of the New Poets are necessary to "express" the present world.

Some of the most pertinent discussion quickened by the Pound controversy has appeared in recent issues of the *Partisan Review*. In the April issue, William Barrett, in an editorial commenting on the Bollingen Award, remarks that in giving it to Pound

the judges showed a laudable intention to reaffirm the validity of aesthetic principles; but, he concludes, "How far is it possible, in a lyric poem, for technical embellishments to transform vicious and ugly matter into beautiful poetry?"

Eight well-known writers, including three of the jurors, give their opinions in the May issue. Among them is Karl Shapiro, who states: "I voted against Pound in the belief that the poet's political and moral philosophy ultimately vitiates his poetry and lowers its standard as literary work." A juror who thought differently is Allen Tate. In the June issue Tate says that he voted for Pound because he feels that "the specific task of the man of letters is to attend to the health of society *not at large* but through literature, that is *through language*." Pound, he believes, "has done more than any other living man to regenerate the language, if not the imaginative forms, of English verse."

Studies which amplify and illumine the points of view of these and other leading figures in the continued polemics swirling about the beleaguered shrine of "art for art's sake" go back to September, 1946, when *Poetry* reintroduced Pound to the American public by printing several pages from Canto LXXX of what is now known as the *Pisan Cantos*. Writing editorially at that time, George Dillon raised the question: "Can you reasonably refuse to publish a poem because of what you believe to be the pernicious effect of its ideas? . . . Ideas however absurd, do not become pernicious in written form except through the medium of dishonest, and therefore bad, writing. . . . If we are thinking of our hard-defended rudiments of democracy, I can imagine no danger to them from one who writes as candidly as Pound does. His political ideas, appearing as what they are, have only their proper effect, which is peevish and trivial." The same number of *Poetry* carries an essay by T. S. Eliot, who reviews Pound's career and analyzes his art, particularly to the point of showing his own and other contemporary poets' indebtedness

to him. Eliot concludes that Pound's greatest contribution to the work of other poets "is his insistence upon the immensity of the amount of *conscious* labor to be performed by the poet; and his invaluable suggestions for the kind of training the poet should give himself—study of form, metric and vocabulary in the poetry of diverse literature, and study of good prose." R. P. Blackmur and J. V. Healy, in the same issue, continue in the same vein. Thus three years ago was described the storm center of the present controversy and the credo of one of Pound's most militant champions. And thus Shapiro's reference to the influence of Eliot (*Partisan Review*, May, 1949) in the Bollingen award becomes more clear.

Eliot's influence also comes into more sharpened perspective after the rereading of Delmore Schwarz's "The Literary Dictatorship of T. S. Eliot" (*Partisan Review*, February, 1949). Schwarz shows how Eliot revalued the history of English poetry in one set of terms between 1922 and 1933 and then gradually reversed his whole evaluation between 1933 and 1946. Thus, for example, Tennyson, scorned in 1922, in the later period became an object of Eliot's elevated commendation. Nevertheless, in his second period, Eliot succeeded himself as a literary dictator! Schwarz questions the infallibility of any literary dictator, and we naturally wonder how Pound will fare with Eliot ten years from now.

Meanwhile, E. M. Forster, without a breath of reference to the current hullabaloo, contributes to the August *Harper's* a critical essay entitled "Art for Art's Sake." This is a principle which Forster firmly upholds, but he points out that many misconceptions arise from the attitude that art is a thing apart from life, which it isn't. It is a part of, and is imbued with, life. The reason he believes in "art for art's sake" is that he believes that art is the only thing in the material world which has internal order.

Perhaps Rudolph Flesch has hit upon a spot of ground upon which we may all meet in common. In writing about "What the War Did to Prose" (*Saturday Review of Lit-*

erature, August 13), he points out that recent fiction has shown two tendencies. One is the use of the vernacular, derived from journalism, the other the effort to portray the complex layers of individual thinking, probably due to the rediscovery of Henry James, the Kafka revival, and the cult of existentialism.

TWO SOUND, SENSIBLE, AND STYListically lively articles on Shakespeare, valuable both to teacher and students, appeared during the summer: "Olivier, Freud, and Hamlet," by John Ashworth in the *Atlantic Monthly*, and "World Playbill No. 1," by Marchette Chute in the *Saturday Review of Literature* (July 23).

Ashworth is highly critical of Olivier's treatment of Hamlet—"cut and dried and then reheated with a sprinkling of Freud." Olivier erred, he feels, in following Freud, whom Ashworth believes to be very mistaken in his interpretation of Hamlet's character. Freud erred in projecting his own cultural attitude into Shakespeare's play instead of trying to understand the Elizabethan culture, which, if understood, explains a great deal of what Freud misses in Hamlet. For example, Freud's inability to see Hamlet's motives led him to the conclusion that Shakespeare had written a play without showing the motives of the central character and to think that Hamlet could not make up his mind. Olivier swallows this nonsense; and so his Hamlet is Freudian, not Shakespearean. Olivier at least could have profited by the fruits of scholarly research of these last fifty years. They would have shown him *inter alia*, that the Elizabethan audience, and Hamlet, believed in ghosts. They also believed in demons; believed that Hamlet wasn't sure at first whether the ghost was his father's own or a demon disguised to lure him into evil-doing; and believed that when he had satisfied himself that it was a real ghost, Hamlet acted.

Again, Olivier cuts the play to leave out the politics. This makes the society and the people in the film play unreal and again

leads to misconstruings of motivation. Even the physical setting in the film—the lonely, lonely corridor effect—minimizes the political difficulty of killing the king and historically is not true. The English monarch in real life and the king, Hamlet's uncle, had many people about them. Moreover, Shakespeare had Polonius and Ophelia living in their own house. . . . And so on! Olivier has produced a film which people like, Ashworth allows, but it is not Shakespeare's *Hamlet*.

That "Shakespeare Kept the Right Company" Marchette Chute very clearly shows in her sympathetic reconstruction of Shakespeare's relationship with his fellow-actors. Miss Chute has a firm and scholarly grip on the theatrical history of Shakespeare's day, but her velvet style gloves it so handsomely that we read on entranced, as if Shakespeare and Burbage, Heming and Kemp, were living contemporaries.

"THE NOVELS OF HENRY GREEN," by Philip Toynbee, in the May *Partisan Review*, introduces a British novelist who, for the most part, is unfamiliar to American readers. Green is a businessman, a Birmingham manufacturer, and an old Etonian as well as a capitalist. Nevertheless, according to Toynbee, he has written about the proletariat with more insight than has any contemporary writer of proletarian origin. He is already the author of seven novels. The three best are *Caught*, *Loving*, and *Back*. His last is *Concluding* (1948). Green's style is characterized by short, staccato sentences, which at times become a kind of shorthand, and by oddities of diction, sometimes successful, sometimes not, but always showing that the author is experimenting and is aware that language is a living, changing thing. Toynbee regards him as important. The British read him. Americans may do so shortly, when his books become available here.

THE TWENTY-FIFTH ANNIVERSARY issue of the *Saturday Review of Literature* appeared August 6. It is thick (almost two

hundred pages) and is divided into three sections: books, ideas, the arts. Stellar authors re-evaluate American literature and the works of individual writers. Interesting; and helpful in catching up with, and getting perspective on, the American literary scene.

THREE ESSAYS ON POETRY WHICH appear in the March *PMLA* should be noted.

Marion Witt's study of "Yeats's Revision of His Later Poems" is valuable because it reveals clearly Yeats's methods and may be used advantageously by young students as well as older ones to further their acquaintance with the creative process at work. More specifically, it should sharpen their perception of the refinements of language, for Miss Witt shows by use of parallel passages and discussions that many of Yeats's changes are those of diction, tending toward greater simplicity and more colloquialism, toward greater power of word or phrase, toward improvement of the details of sounds, toward tightening syntax and cutting tedious connectives. These changes form a remarkable record of the poet's growth, and even a brief study ought to point up the value of revision to a student asked to re-write a theme.

In "Keats and the Struggle-for-Existence Tradition" Professor Hoxie N. Fairchild examines the role played by the struggle-for-existence concept in Keats's thought. Keats alone, among the English "romantic poets" in the days before Darwin, seems to have been concerned with the idea—which, however, is not voiced directly in his poems but only in his letters and in the verse-poem, *Epistle to Reynolds*.

The relation of Shelley's *Prometheus Unbound* to the *Prometheus Bound* of Aeschylus is closely analyzed by Bennett Weaver. In many instances Shelley and Aeschylus make similar uses of the Greek myth. There are also dissimilarities, the most notable being that in the Greek myth Prometheus trades his secret for his freedom, whereas in Shelley's poem he does not.

THE WORK OF THAT MOST CONTROVERSIAL writer, Jean-Paul Sartre, is discussed by Rayner Heppenstall in the current issue of the *Quarterly Review of Literature* (Vol. IV, No. 4). The impact of Sartre is disproportionate to his talent, Heppenstall thinks. Thus some have been led to overestimate, others to underestimate, it. To Heppenstall, Sartre appears "the most vital of our contemporaries." This essay surveys his major works. Sartre's best, Heppenstall says, are *La Nausée* and *Huis clos*. The true protagonist in all Sartre's work is Sartre in search of authentic existence. Authentic existence, Sartre argues in his philosophy, demands political responsibility and a total engagement of one's self in the life of one's own time. His is a philosophy of hard living. It is a weakness of his thought that he does not allow sufficient place for contemplation. Nevertheless, it is his philosophy which binds together and integrates all that he writes.

THE NEW AMERICAN QUARTERLY in its second issue (summer) includes an interesting article by Norman Pearson on "The American Poet in Relation to Science." Pearson's article is too compact to summarize here. Briefly, however, he points out that the poet who is honest about facts must live in recognition of the physical world about him; and the world as we know it today is one whose physical reality has been defined by science. There have been obvious effects of science upon poetry, of course, such as the carrying-over of scientific terminology, the new conceptions of time and space; but the greater apparent realism

in modern poetry has resulted from the fact that science has helped to teach that all objects have an equal validity as the immediate subject of poetry, because all objects are similarly parts of the phenomenal world. Pearson then goes on to make clear that the difference in kinds of reality and in methodology which distinguish the poet from the scientist is the basis of a conflict characteristic of our time. "Science is at bottom always concerned with quantitative, measurable things. Anything for which no yardstick is available is under suspicion by the scientist. The poet, on the other hand, having used the yardstick, will drop it to go beyond physics into metaphysics. He has accepted a reality of the senses and of religious and ethical belief. To physical reality he has added a reality of imagination."

COMPARATIVE STUDY OF THE LITERATURES OF THE OCCIDENT AND OF ALL TIMES NOW has its special magazine. *Comparative Literature*, Volume I, No. 1, is dated winter, 1949. It opens with Part I of a paper by René Wellek on "The Conception of 'Romanticism' in Literary History," which refutes by an examination of literary history the notion that the term "romantic" covers such diverse and even antithetical principles as to be unusable. Other articles are "Antike Rhetorik und vergleichende Literaturwissenschaft," "Dante through the Centuries," "Omero e il rinascimento italiano," "Emerson and Bergson on the Comic," "Kafka, Lessing, and Vigny." Subscribers' reading knowledge of German, Italian, and French is assumed. Publisher: University of Oregon, Eugene. Quarterly. \$3.50 a year.

New Books

THEORY OF LITERATURE

Professors Wellek and Warren attempt no less than a complete rationale for the study of literature and are remarkably successful in providing one.¹ Commencing with careful general definitions, they proceed to discuss "extrinsic" methods of approach, which they conclude to be not in themselves unimportant but beside the point of genuinely literary analysis. The central section of the book, on "The Intrinsic Study of Literature," is fairly represented by its opening sentence: "The natural and sensible starting point for work in literary scholarship is the interpretation and analysis of the works of literature themselves." *Theory of Literature* ends with specific and controversial proposals for reforming the American graduate-school program in English.

Earlier reviews indicate that this book will in some instances be taken for a manifesto of the "New Criticism" and accordingly praised and blamed along partisan lines. It may therefore be worth while to point out that *Theory of Literature* differs with New Critical doctrine on a number of crucial issues. Wellek and Warren share with New Critics the fundamental belief that the business of the literary scholar is to study literature itself. And in this opinion both would seem to be wholly correct. But the theory presented here is broader, saner, more objective in outlook than the code of the New Criticism. Wellek and Warren propose a synthesis of criticism and historical scholarship which they term "Perspectivism" (see pp. 35-37) rather than the New Critic's monistic Absolutism. They have achieved an Aristotelian fusion of decisive general judgment with proper respect for particular problems.

¹ René Wellek and Austin Warren, *Theory of Literature*. New York: Harcourt, Brace & Co., 1949. Pp. 403. \$5.00.

Comparison on the topics of meter, imagery and metaphor, genres, and, more broadly, of literary history will serve to illustrate. (At this point the reviewer will anticipate the reasonable charge of unfair simplification by stating that he has considered the question and speaks advisedly.) The New Critical theory of meter ultimately dismisses it by treating it simply as "expressive," with rhetorical stress alone retained. Wellek and Warren, while maintaining that meter cannot finally be separated from the total meaning of the poem, properly grant it a status of its own along with other elements. From the New Critical point of view imagery and metaphor are the work itself: Wellek and Warren treat them as components of the work and point out that "there are good completely imageless poems" (p. 16). In the New Criticism literary genres tend to dissolve into a single invariable criterion of value; Wellek and Warren retain the theory of genres as an important though difficult object for study. Their suggestions for literary history are tentative and multiple, whereas the only literary history likely to emerge from the New Criticism will concern itself solely with the life, death, and twentieth-century resurrection of T. S. Eliot's "unified sensibility." In short, Wellek and Warren succeed in promulgating the same valuable aims of intellectual coherence, critical vitality, and proper literary emphasis which the New Criticism has so far tried and failed to define acceptably.

It is hardly an exaggeration to say that *Theory of Literature* raises every relevant question. It does not, of course, provide every answer, as the authors themselves avow (see p. vi). A manual which is also an expression of original theory, it is tantalizingly brief, though invariably sound, on any single critical issue. Its breadth of meth-

od occasionally involves dulness or merely perfunctory treatment, an impression which may come from the limitations of the reviewer rather than of Wellek and Warren. The notes and bibliographies are extremely valuable.

The concluding chapter, on "The Study of Literature in the Graduate School," might perhaps advantageously have been omitted. Despite its vigor and acuteness, it seems no necessary part of the book, which would better achieve its purpose without it. The "crisis of the profession" (see p. 289) is remediable only by degrees, and the sweeping reforms here proposed are too far from workaday academic and social realities to be helpful.

These qualifications, however, are minor matters. *Theory of Literature* is a remarkable achievement; it may very well be the single most useful volume that a teacher of college English could own.

RICHARD HARTER FOGLE

TULANE UNIVERSITY

THE CANTERBURY TALES

Two new volumes of the *Canterbury Tales*¹ prove once again Chaucer's perennial vitality, his universal human appeal, which begins by exciting an instinct that needs only a touch to awaken—the love of wayfaring. The purpose of these two books is the same: to broaden the base of Chaucer's discipleship, which ought to be a flat pyramid instead of the narrow steeple the academicians have built. Those of us who can look back over some years to our introduction to the Father of English Poetry may now realize that our first gleaning of this rich field was often done under conditions that were sadly amiss. We did an enormous threshing of dry straw, urged on by zealous but mis-

guided philologists—perfectly oblivious to Chaucer himself—who set us to comparing texts and cataloguing vowel changes, putting the letter (always with the correct accent mark) so far above the spirit that the spirit was completely lost. This chasing of panting syllables left us with little energy or leisure to look for Chaucer's large humanity, his infinite jest, his psychological subtleties. These two volumes, by presenting Chaucer in the idiom of modern colloquial English, may do something to rescue him from the professional linguist and let him be read for what he is.

Professor Lumiansky's strikingly illustrated volume presents the General Prologue and all the tales but four. He omits all the Prioress' story of the Christian lad killed by the Jews; "The Tale of Melibeus" he cuts down to a half-page; with "The Monk's Tale" he does even better than the Host and shortens the Monk's seventeen tragedies to one; and he drops the Parson's long-winded sermon on penitence (how could Chaucer give such a tale to him, who "coude in litel thing han suffisaunce"?).

There can be no reasonable objection to these elisions, but I think the translator has brought in unnecessary confusion by changing the generally accepted order of the tales. Some of them which lack the cement of prologue and epilogue can be shifted, but there are others that fit as snugly as the verses of a sonnet and cannot be shuffled without trouble. It seems to me that in his general plan Lumiansky would have done well to bow to convention and present his tales in Skeat's order.

In a brief enthusiastic preface Mark Van Doren remarks the skill with which the translator renders "the absolute plainness of Chaucer." Closely joined to this is another virtue for which Lumiansky deserves our thanks: he has been able to express in our twentieth-century idiom the flavor of many colloquial passages which word-for-word glossing simply cannot bring to life. Nothing in language fades so quickly as vulgar speech, and to recapture the essence of these parts of Chaucer and transmit them alive

¹ *The Canterbury Tales of Geoffrey Chaucer*. Prose translation by R. M. Lumiansky. New York: Simon & Schuster, 1948. Pp. xxix + 345. \$2.95.

Chaucer's Canterbury Tales. An interlinear translation by Vincent F. Hopper. ("Educational Series.") Brooklyn, N.Y.: Barron, 1948. Pp. xv + 448. Paper \$1.50. Cloth \$2.50.

and kicking to the modern reader is an achievement of the first order. Let this passage illustrate what I mean:

Sir olde kaynârd, is this thyn array?
 Why is my neighebores wyf so gay?
 She is honoured over-al ther she goth;
 I sitte at hoom, I have no thrifty cloth.
 What dostow at my neighebores hous?
 Is she so fair? artow so amorous?
 What rowne ye with our mayde? *ben'cite!*
 Sir olde lechour, lat thy japes be!
 And if I have a gossib or a freend,
 With-uten gilt, thou chydest as a feend,
 If that I walke or playe un-to his hous!

Is this your doing, you old fool? Why is my neighbor's wife so gay? She is admired wherever she goes, while I sit at home without a single good dress. What do you do at my neighbor's house? Is she so pretty? Are you so affectionate? What do you whisper to our maid? Bless me! You old lecher, stop your tricks! Now if I innocently have a friend or an acquaintance, you scold like the devil when I just walk to his house or amuse myself there.

Professor Hopper gives us the General Prologue and six of the tales with their appropriate prologues and epilogues: the Knight's, Prioress', Nun's Priest's, Pardoner's, Wife of Bath's, and the Franklin's. Thus every type is represented except the fabliau, and it might be wished that in place of one or the other of the romances—the Knight's story or the Franklin's—one of the more earthy narratives had been included. Even in a collection so small as this an illusion of completeness would have been helped along if such characters as the Miller, the Reeve, and the Summoner were heard from.

The same problem of warped sequence that plagued Professor Lumiansky dogs Professor Hopper as he skips from one tale to another.

Professor Hopper's aim in offering his interlinear translation is to provide "a method of reading Chaucer in the original without the annoying necessity of constant interruption for consultation of a glossary or dictionary. It should be easy for the eye

and ear to follow the original while translation of difficult words and phrases in the interlineation will suggest to the mind a close approximation of the meanings intended." His modern English keeps pace with Chaucer's language as nearly as possible, breaking a word-for-word parallel only where grammatical or idiomatic differences come up. Indeed, the reader may expect to find on an average sixteen-line page at least three or four lines where ditto marks were all the translator required and as many more where the modern version differs only in spelling or word order. In effect, then, this translation gives the beginning reader a well-founded sense of getting his Chaucer straight, and a careful perusal of these six tales should enable him to pick up his Skeat and read merrily on with only an occasional reference to a glossary. Hopper's prose lacks the verve and raciness of Lumiansky's, but each was following his own road; and in holding his course faithfully Hopper has provided a reliable introduction to the Master's gross and delightful world. It was with this same object in mind that Lumiansky included at the end of his translations the complete Prologue and "The Nun's Priest's Tale" in Middle English. Reading either of these two excellent books should make any beginning Chaucerian eager for a deeper draught from the deep well. "What nedeth it to sermone of it more?"

TOM BURNS HABER

OHIO STATE UNIVERSITY

RECORDING OF TWENTIETH-CENTURY POETRY IN ENGLISH

As one is probably entitled to expect, the Library of Congress recordings of *Twentieth Century Poets in English*¹ are technically a

¹ *Twentieth Century Poetry in English: Contemporary Recordings of the Poets Reading Their Own Poems Selected and Arranged by the Consultants in Poetry in English at the Library of Congress and Issued under a Grant from the Bollingen Foundation.* Album IV: William Carlos Williams, Robert Penn

high achievement. Made of unbreakable vinylite, the records are light and easily handled and provide reproductions that are quiet and true. About the only disadvantage of this plastic material, when compared with shellac, is an occasional delicate click resulting from the release of static electricity; for most listeners, however, this is too faint to be disturbing.

Each album contains five records, with each record devoted to a single poet. For every record there is an accompanying printed sheet bearing a brief autobiographical note and the text of the poems read. With only a few exceptions, the selections are intelligible at first hearing and are justly representative of their respective authors.

In general, the poets offer their own lines with a sincerity sure to gratify that teacher who wants his students to comprehend, first of all, that poetry is an unaffected, if sedulously artful, human statement. Of course he may wish, especially before a speech class, to designate certain idiosyncrasies of reading, some of which detract from the immediate effectiveness of the poems. Ransom overdoes his sibilants (did the engineer place him too close to the microphone?), so that his exquisite "Bells for John Whitesides' Daughter" is impaired by hisses. Jeffers reads with a patient, lazy-lipped weariness—perhaps partly an after-

effect of the nearly fatal illness he suffered last year—so that certain words are blurred. Yet this slight technical ineptitude seems, in "Oh, Lovely Rock," unexpectedly to consummate a blending of compassion with strength that is present in most of Jeffers' writings, though too many critics have missed it. When Jarrell made his recording, he may have suffered somewhat from "mike-fright"; he presents his lines with an almost tearful, distracting jerkiness. Somewhat similarly, Meredith sounds strangely dispirited. On the other hand, a very impressive reader is Winters, whose "John Sutter" and "The California Oaks" come forth deep-voiced and chantlike and carry that particular emotional tension that distinguishes poetry from mere language. Warren and Shapiro pronounce their selections thoughtfully and strongly, if not with the appealing gusto of Williams and Cummings; and one can be especially grateful that the clear voice of Theodore Spencer is heard here as inadvertent memorial to a poet who died too soon. All in all, both teacher and student, as well as the person who simply likes contemporary poetry, may be assured that these fourth and fifth albums are a rewarding investment.

ROBERT HUME

UNIVERSITY OF NEVADA

Fiction, Poetry, and Criticism

Goethe the Poet. By KARL VIETOR. Harvard University Press. \$5.00.

The author assumes that "lovers of poetry in the English speaking world may welcome a book of interpretation and of criticism" when it is also about Goethe. He doubts that the celebration of Goethe's

birth will emphasize that importance as a thinker and poet to which history proves him entitled. Hence this book.

A Commentary on Goethe's "Faust." By D. J. ENRIGHT. New Directions. Pp. 158. \$1.50.

First published in British *Scrutiny*. The interpretation is based on the wager between the Lord and Mephistopheles in the "Prologue in Heaven"—that Mephistopheles could not destroy Faust's moral sense. No character is to be regarded as the author's mouthpiece. The Lord wins, in spite of Faust's weakness and errors. The reader of the *Commentary* is impelled to reread the play.

Warren, E. E. Cummings, Robinson Jeffers, and Theodore Spencer; Album V: John Crowe Ransom, William Meredith, Yvor Winters, Randall Jarrell, and Karl Shapiro. The Library of Congress Recording Laboratory, Washington 25, D.C. \$8.25 each plus packing postage charges.

Elephant Walk. By ROBERT STANDISH. Macmillan. \$3.00.

Tom Carey owned thousands of tea-growing acres in Ceylon. He built a magnificent mansion of teak-wood and stone, and contrarily, and against the advice of the natives, he built it across the trail of the elephant people. His bride died too soon to live in the house, but his son brought a young wife to the mansion—now haunted by the "old governor's" powerful will, though he is long dead. The elephants never forgot. Good light reading. Clever jacket. July Literary Guild selection.

The Track of the Cat. By WALTER VAN TILBURG CLARK. Random. \$3.00.

By the author of *The Ox-Bow Incident*. In the Bridges' snowbound Nevada ranchhouse are parents, three sons, a daughter, and another girl. The first snow comes, and strange bellowing of the cattle suggests an attack by the black panther. Joe Sam, old Indian servant, believes the panther to be supernatural. Two brothers leave the cabin to stalk the panther—natural or supernatural. It is a dramatic story on two levels: it is a story of mysticism and yet a very real story of nature and man's eternal struggles; there are tensions in the life of everyone concerned, each apparently being stalked by a black panther. Very readable.

The Happy Tree. By SHEILA KAYE-SMITH. Harper. \$3.00.

A Sussex love story. Kemp, a lonely young farmer, falls in love with the wife of a newcomer. The story is full of the author's deep feeling for the people of Sussex, their loyalty and eventual common sense.

Death of a Salesman. By ARTHUR MILLER. Viking. \$2.50.

Given Pulitzer Prize and Drama Critics' Circle Award. Mr. Miller is author of *Focus*. Willy Loman, traveling salesman, a former go-getter now sixty-three, is forced to face the reality of what he is and has been, which is not at all what he has dreamed and pretended to be. Unfortunately, he has taught his sons his own methods. It is a poignant drama too common in human living. If you can't see it, read it. Very unusual stage setting. June co-selection of Book-of-the-Month Club.

The Man Who Made Friends with Himself. By CHRISTOPHER MORLEY. Doubleday. \$3.00.

Semicomic, "a story of double exposures and plural meanings." Is it true that anyone's "better self" is hard to kill? Richard Tolman, whose story it is, once asked: "Is it fair, or wise, or safe to creep up on an organism—even a village, or a mind—and watch it live?" An odd story with a good title. Highly praised.

The Spell of the Pacific. Selected and edited by CARL STROVEN and A. GROVE DAY. Macmillan. \$6.50.

An anthology of Pacific literature, with an introduction by James A. Michener. Both authors teach English at the University of Hawaii. This volume is divided into eight sections, with accounts of early voyages, including Captain Bligh's story of the mutiny on the "Bounty" and the *Town Ho's* story from *Moby Dick*. A chapter is devoted to each of these: Polynesia, Hawaii, New Zealand, Australia, Melanesia, Micronesia, the Philippines. A very delightful volume. 940 pages.

The Devil's Own Dear Son: A Comedy of the Fatted Calf. By JAMES BRANCH CABELL. Farrar, Straus. \$2.75.

Some readers may say it is sacrilegious or at least irreverent, but many will say, "It's Cabell." St. Augustine (Florida) and Hell provide the setting. Cabell's Hell is a very unusual place. When Diago, proprietor of Bide-a-While Tourist Home in St. Augustine discovered that his real father was Red Samäel, the Seducer (a prince of Hell), and also found a little green stone, the story of which was known to his Aunt Isabel, things really began to happen. Well, it's Cabell.

Nineteen Eighty-four. By GEORGE ORWELL. Harcourt. \$3.00.

By the author of *Animal Farm*. The scene is London. The future toward which society may be heading—the life only two generations ahead—may in part be present now. These, at least, are the implications of this novel which pictures the life of man in 1984. "Newspeak," a new and official language, has been devised to diminish the range of thinking; "free" is no longer used as we use it now. Political and intellectual freedom no longer exist. Frightening! July Book of the Month.

Our English Heritage. By GERALD W. JOHNSON. ("Peoples of America Series," Vol V; edited by LOUIS ADAMIC.) Lippincott. \$3.50.

England's contribution to American life. The author classifies the people who first came to America as "Expendables," "Indispensables," "The Gentlemen of Quality"; he discusses such institutions as language, law, faith, arts, sciences, philosophy. Colorful, well organized, skillfully told.

Writing for Love or Money. Edited by NORMAN COUSINS. Pp. 278. \$3.50.

The editor of the *Saturday Review of Literature* here assembles thirty-five essays or excerpts about writing, one from each of thirty-five established authors, many of them of first rank. Some are serious and illuminating, some humorous, and a few negligible. The contributions cover almost every aspect of how to write and how it feels to write.

Beulah Land. By H. L. DAVIS. Morrow. \$3.00.

By the author of *Honey in the Horn*. In 1851 four people—a white man, his half-Indian daughter (the heroine), an outcast Cherokee woman, and a white boy raised Indian—left North Carolina and started west. They saw and lived through the opening of the West, from the breakup of the Cherokee Nation, the Indian massacres, the migration down the Tennessee and Mississippi, and the Oregon Trail. All the color and gusto of frontier life.

Trained for Genius: The Life and Writings of Ford Madox Ford. By DOUGLAS GOLDRING. Dutton. \$3.75.

Highly praised by English reviewers. The London *Sketch* says, "The curious, sometimes touching, and sometimes almost ridiculous story of the mess Ford made of his financial and matrimonial affairs . . . the story of the foundation and failure of the first *English Review* . . . Ford worked in an age of giants. . . ." "The whole book—a quality of almost breathless interest."

Great Novelists and Their Novels. By W. SOMERSET MAUGHAM. Winston. \$3.00.

Essays on "the ten greatest novels" of the world and the men and women who wrote them. Maugham describes the personalities of these ten authors. He reviews each author's purpose, his motives, imperfections and perfections, backgrounds, etc. Dickens, Melville, Stendhal, Fielding, Balzac, Brontë, Dostoevski, Tolstoi, Flaubert, and Jane Austen are the novelists chosen by Maugham.

Old Man Goriot. By HONORÉ DE BALZAC. *David Copperfield.* By CHARLES DICKENS. *Tom Jones.* By HENRY FIELDING. *Pride and Prejudice.* By JANE AUSTEN. Edited by W. SOMERSET MAUGHAM. Winston. \$3.50 each.

The first four of Maugham's ten greatest; the others will follow. He has edited these in the belief that they will reach a larger audience if all non-essentials are eliminated. Each charming volume is illustrated by a different artist. Highly satisfactory.

All Sorts and Kinds. By CHRISTOPHER LA FARGE. Coward-McCann. \$3.00.

Seventeen short stories and how they were written. In the Preface the author clearly states the standards to which he has tried to adhere. He also discusses the major problems which he has discovered in his creative writing.

High Jungle. By WILLIAM BEEBE. Duell. \$4.50.

The great naturalist and scientist bases this study of the beauty and wonders of nature in a tropical paradise upon recent expeditions to the Venezuelan Andes. It is enriched by his experiences of a lifetime, as he has traveled all over the world. Handsomely illustrated. Choice reading for troubled times.

The Best American Short Stories of 1949. Edited by MARTHA FOLEY. Houghton. \$3.50.

With the "Yearbook of the American Short Story." Twenty-eight stories from the magazines, biographical notices, Foreword. The authors are very largely new; many are still in their twenties. The choice of themes chosen by this postwar generation is of particular interest. Miss Foley comments on the number that are stories of childhood. The fantasy is popular, and the villainess has nearly replaced the villain.

U.S. Stories. Selected by MARTHA FOLEY and ABRAHAM ROTHBERG. Hendricks. Trade edition, \$5.00; textbook edition, \$3.50.

Regional stories from the forty-eight states. Object, to give encouragement to every young writer to use his own background in writing his stories.

C. S. Lewis, Apostle to the Skeptics. By CHAD WALSH. Macmillan. \$2.50.

Literary technique, theology, views of afterlife, and treatment of original sin are among the many features which Mr. Walsh discusses in his study of the author of *The Screwtape Letters*.

The Complete Stories of Herman Melville. Edited by JAY LEYDA. Random. \$4.00.

Introduction and notes by the editor. Fifteen stories in the order in which they appeared, 1853-56.

A Treasury of Russian Verse. Edited by AVRAHAM YARMOLINSKY. Macmillan. \$5.00.

Translations by poets of renown. Covers one hundred and fifty years and represents all major poets.

Goethe Wisdom and Experience. Pantheon. \$3.75.

Selections by Ludwig Curtius. Translated and edited by H. J. Weigand. Contents: "Religion," "Nature," "Science and Philosophy," "The Social Sphere," "The Moral Sphere," "Art," "The Body Politic." Arranged chronologically and systematically.

Autobiography: Poetry and Truth from My Own Life.

By JOHANN WOLFGANG VON GOETHE. Translated by R. O. MOON. Public Affairs Press. \$5.00.

In celebration of the two-hundredth anniversary of the birth of Goethe. This is the first modern translation of his very complete story of his early life. 700 pages.

Dickens: His Character, Comedy and Career. By HESKETH PEARSON. Harper. \$4.00.

The biographer has sought in his study of Dickens to present the man as his contemporaries knew him, and has succeeded. A many-sided character. 361 pages.

Alfred Tennyson. By CHARLES TENNYSON. Macmillan. \$6.50.

The grandson of the poet clearly remembers his grandfather's later years. He has had access to many previously inaccessible letters and papers and sheds new light on the background of various poems. 579 pages.

Eastward in Eden: The Love Story of Emily Dickinson. By DOROTHY GARDNER. Longmans. \$2.50.

A play following the pattern of recent research and based upon the evidence of Miss Dickinson's love poetry.

Virginia Woolf: A Commentary. By BERNARD BLACKSTONE. Harcourt. \$3.75.

The author urges the importance of continuity in reading Virginia Woolf's novels: "Her work is a whole, in that each scene and image is related to other scenes and images throughout the novels." He interweaves comment and quotation very pleasantly.

Gertrude Stein: Form and Intelligibility. By ROSALIND S. MILLER. Exposition Press. \$3.50.

A critical evaluation containing the Radcliffe themes. Edited from the manuscripts in the Yale University Library. There are also newly discovered manuscripts, written while Miss Stein was a student at Radcliffe. Mrs. Miller has eliminated some of the "literary jargon" to give insight into what the author meant to express.

The Diary of a Writer. By F. M. DOSTOEVSKI. Translated and annotated by BORIS BRASOL. Scribner. \$12.50.

First English translation of the Russian novelist's diary for the years 1873, 1876-77, and parts of 1880 and 1881. Source material, technique, character, and thought are revealed. Two handsome volumes, boxed; 1,097 and 558 pages.

The Histrionic Mr. Poe. By N. BRYLLION FAGIN. Johns Hopkins University Press. \$4.00.

"... of all the Poe books ever done in English, it seems to me the best, and by long odds. It is well informed, it is shrewd and convincing in its judgments, and it is beautifully written."—H. L. Mencken.

The Life of Ralph Waldo Emerson. By RALPH L. RUSK. Scribner. \$6.00.

Full use has been made of the quantities of original manuscripts and letters treasured by the Emerson family and those in the hands of other owners. The result is a rich, dramatic biography of a real man with a many-sided character. 592 pages.

Complete Poems of Robert Frost, 1949. By ROBERT FROST. Holt. \$6.00.

The only complete collection of Frost's work. 642 pages. Good print and paper.

The Critical Reader. Edited by WALLACE DOUGLAS, ROY LAMSON, and HALLETT SMITH. Norton. \$5.00.

"A collection of poems, stories and essays, for the reader who seeks enjoyment from his reading together with the opportunity of developing his critical judgment." 785 pages.

One-Horse Farm. By ROBERT P. TRISTRAM COFFIN. Macmillan. \$2.50.

Thirty-seven new poems by Mr. Coffin, illustrated with twenty of his own attractive pen-and-ink drawings. The faces and figures are familiar.

Quest for Myth. By RICHARD CHASE. Louisiana State University Press. \$3.25.

In his Foreword the author states, "My purpose is to perform some of the spadework which the current interest in myth appears to call for, by bringing certain of the older students of myth, mainly philosophers, historians, philologists, psychologists and anthropologists, into proper perspective." Readers interested in myth in literature, old or modern, will find this study enlightening and informative.

Writers on Writing. Edited by HERSCHEL BRICKELL. Doubleday. \$3.00.

By the staff of the University of New Hampshire Writers' Conference. For the author and would-be author, how to write and sell everything from lyric poetry to radio scripts. The contributors include three Pulitzer Prize winners. Each chapter is preceded by a brief sketch of the author.

The Limits of Poetry; Selected Essays: 1928-1948. By ALLEN TATE. Morrow. \$4.00.

Essays, covering a wide range, selected by Mr. Tate from the main body of his work. Included is an essay on Ezra Pound (1931). Malcolm Cowley says: "I doubt if any other poet in this country is a better judge of his contemporaries than Allen Tate." 379 pages.

Lectures in Criticism. Johns Hopkins University. By R. P. BLACKMUR, BENEDETTO CROCE, HENRI M. PEYRE, JOHN CROWE RANSOM, HERBERT READ, and ALLEN TATE. ("Bollingen Series," Vol. XVI.) Pantheon. \$3.50.

Foreword by Elliott Coleman, who says: "The immediate object [of this symposium] was a fresh examination of some of the salients in the history of critical judgment." Critics chosen for re-examination are Aristotle, Longinus, Coleridge, De Sanctis. Included is a discussion of present problems. 209 pages.

Post Stories: 1948. Edited by BEN HIBBS. Random. \$2.75.

Twenty short stories chosen from the two hundred and more stories published in the *Saturday Evening Post* in 1948. Many famous authors are represented. The range in subject and treatment is important and stimulating.

The Golden Nightingale: Essays on Some Principles of Poetry in the Lyrics of William Butler Yeats. By DONALD A. STAUFFER. Macmillan. \$3.50.

Yeats, who wrote "the greatest poems of our lifetime," felt that science and formal reasoning fail to reveal ultimate truth, and therefore he deliberately cultivated mysticism and vision. To some extent he wore a mask. The poetic symbol comes unbidden into the mind and grows slowly. Image and meaning are inseparable, and the more perfect the symbol, the less analyzable it is. From considerations such as these the critic goes on to deal with "The Reading of a Poem," "The Purpose of Poetry," and "The Progress of a Poet."

Sense and Sensibility in Modern Poetry. By WILLIAM VAN O'CONNOR. University of Chicago Press. Pp. 278. \$4.00.

A weighty book, the first major effort of one of the younger New Critics. With considerable learning and no little insight O'Connor demands complexity, tension, intensity, and the other virtues of the New Poetry. He displays neither critical doubts nor much appreciation of living poets who are not "modern."

Image and Idea. By PHILIP RAHV. New Directions. \$3.00.

Fourteen critical essays on prose writers or their work—Dostoevski, Tolstoi, Hawthorne, Henry James, Kafka, Mrs. Woolf, Henry Miller, Koestler, DeVoto. Rahv, now strongly anti-Communist, in-

clines to sententious openings and sweeping statements that are frequently acute. His division of all American writers into "palefaces" (sophisticated intellectuals) and "redskins" (impulsive and immediate realists) is an example of the insight and the exaggeration.

Freedom and Renaissance. By HARDIN CRAIG. University of North Carolina Press. \$2.50.

Six essays on contemporary life, several of them based on addresses, by the famous Renaissance scholar. The most telling is the address first delivered, "A North Carolina Renaissance," which urges that under present conditions earnest application by college students and faculty would produce something comparable to the Renaissance. Some of the other essays argue against centralization of power, in our government or elsewhere. The last chapter declares that the individual needs to be, and society needs to have him, broadly educated, knowing more about more fields of knowledge than the typical scholar of today.

The Art of Readable Writing. By RUDOLPH FLESCHE. Harper. Pp. 237. \$3.00.

The author of *The Art of Plain Talk* continues his good advice. Most of his ideas are, of course, familiar to good teachers of English, but he writes readably and convincingly. He prints two exceedingly simple scales for measuring the interest and the simplicity of writing. If supplemented by a handbook, this would be a good text for freshman English.

Textbooks

Prose and Poetry of the Continental Renaissance in Translation. Edited by HAROLD HOOPER BLANCHARD. Longmans, Green. Pp. 1084. \$6.00.

An anthology for college undergraduates of selections from the works of eleven nondramatic writers who influenced the literature of the Renaissance in England. These include, of course, Petrarch, Ariosto, Tasso, Ronsard, Boccaccio, Erasmus, Rabelais, Castiglione, Machiavelli, Cervantes, and Montaigne. For each, Professor Blanchard has provided a biography and a bibliography. The translations are standard ones of recognized quality. A list of works in English which show the influence of these eleven writers is appended.

Modern Minds: An Anthology of Ideas. Compiled by HOWARD MUMFORD JONES, RICHARD M. LUDWIG, and MARVIN G. PERRY, JR. Heath. Pp. 591. \$3.50.

A varied collection of forty-eight essays and short stories, all provocative and all well written, as-

sembled for the purpose not only of providing the student with models of good writing but also of stimulating him to independent thinking and to both oral and written discussion of controversial ideas. The selections chosen fall very casually into six categories described as "The Problems of Education," "Life in America," "Gods and Machines," "War and Peace," "The Light Touch," and "Fact in Fiction." Biographical sketches and study helps are intentionally brief but are sharply directed to close reading and the forming of individual opinion.

Dominant Types in British and American Literature. Edited by WILLIAM H. DAVENPORT, LOWRY C. WIMBERLY, and HARRY SHAW. Harper's. Pp. 1266. \$6.00.

A text planned primarily for students who take an introductory college course in literature but do not plan to major in English. Material presented by types and chronologically within each category from Beowulf to Shapiro. Includes poetry, drama, essay, biography, fiction. Two volumes in one.

The Living Shakespeare: Twenty-two Plays and the Sonnets. Edited by OSCAR JAMES CAMPBELL. Macmillan. Pp. 1239. \$5.50.

An edition for the college student in which the student is kept in mind. The approach in the essays and notes is to take the student to the plays as if to contemporary drama, that is, as to something which is vital, living, and fresh. The focus therefore is on what Shakespeare has to say. Textual problems, antiquarian information, etc., are made secondary or omitted. A bulky volume is inevitable, but, once within its pages, the student finds a lively style and lively material.

Living Literature for Oral Interpretation. Edited by MOIRÉE COMPÈRE. Appleton-Century-Crofts. Pp. 451. \$3.00.

An anthology of poems and prose writings which particularly lend themselves to interpretive oral reading. Mrs. Compère includes also an introduction on selecting, cutting, and adapting material for oral reading, another on the principles of program arrangement, and a bibliography of recommended sources.

Modern Rhetoric: With Readings. By CLEANTH BROOKS and ROBERT PENN WARREN. Harcourt, Brace. Pp. 928. \$3.50.

Both the authors of this volume are experienced as creative writers and as teachers, and their own continual practice of the craft of writing and of its explication to students has prompted them to produce a volume which has none of the tags and labels of the usual handbook. Their approach to teaching the problems of composition is signalized by their conception of composition as rhetoric, in its basic meaning, namely, as the art of expressive discourse. Thus, although there are, of course, chapters on the sentence, the paragraph, diction, etc., there are also chapters on metaphor, situation and tone, and rhythm. But it would be wrong to imply that this is a book for the student in creative writing. It is for all students. The age-old problems are discussed concretely with constant analysis of specific passages. The readings section contains thirty-eight excellent essays by modern prose writers which are tied to the text chapters by numerous specific cross-references and are used constantly in the text exercises throughout the book. An appendix includes suggestions on note-taking and on making an outline, as well as sections on "casual analysis" and "the syllogism."

Problems in Reading and Writing. Compiled and edited by HENRY W. SAMS and WALDO F. MCNEIR. Prentice-Hall. Pp. 590. \$3.50.

An anthology of readings chosen specifically to the end of helping to improve the student's writing.

Some are difficult. All are "primarily intended to be sound examples of week-day American and British prose." Each assignment in reading includes its own introduction, guide questions, vocabulary lists, and writing and study aids. Thus directed to close and analytical reading, the student is helped to more effective writing.

Essentials of Communicative Speech. By ROBERT T. OLIVER, DALLAS C. DICKEY, and HAROLD P. ZELKO. Dryden Press. Pp. 338. \$2.60.

A book for speech students in which the emphasis is upon the practical essentials of communicative speech. The authors, who are teachers of long experience, have selected for thorough treatment these problems: resources for speaking, planning, and organizing a speech, developing the ideas and presenting them; effective listening; influencing, informing, and persuading an audience; the use of visual aids; the basic principles of discussion and conference. Illustrated.

Understanding and Using English. By NEWMAN B. BIRK and GENEVIEVE B. BIRK. Odyssey Press. Pp. 459. \$3.00.

The authors have built this book on some important premises: that freshmen wish to study English on a college level even if they aren't up to it; that they ought to be aware of the nature and power of language; that there should be a live relationship between classroom study and the language which students hear, read, speak, and write; that they need concrete guidance. Thus the contents include much more material on the nature of language than on mechanics as such, and the approach is one of how and why instead of do and don't.

New Practice Handbook in English. By EASLEY S. JONES, MILDRED WALLACE, and AGNES LAW JONES. Appleton-Century-Crofts. Pp. 278. \$2.50.

A handbook to help the student help himself. Divided into two sections. Part I presents rule and examples on each left-hand page and an easily scored exercise on the right. Part II shows how to develop and organize material.

Effective Written English. By WARREN E. SCHUTT. D. Van Nostrand Co. Pp. 433.

A handbook for college students focused to give instruction in writing English "as will best meet their needs in life and earning a living" and to present rules and principles positively and rationally. Contains better material than a rather dull format would suggest.

New and Revised Editions

College Composition. By CLARENCE D. THORPE and CARLTON F. WELLS. 3d ed. Harper's. Pp. 617. \$3.00.

A revision of the first edition (published in 1929 by Thomas E. Rankin, Clarence D. Thorpe, and Melvin T. Solve) and not of the second edition. Adapted to the college student of today. Emphasis on practical aspects of composition and individual needs and interests of the student.

Patterns for Living. By OSCAR JAMES CAMPBELL, JUSTINE VAN GUNDY, and CAROLINE SHRODES. 3d ed. Macmillan. Pp. 951. \$4.00.

A book of readings which "combines the most enduring material of former Parts I and II" with additional selections.

A Complete Course in Freshman English. By HARRY SHAW. 2d rev. ed. Harper's. Pp. 843. \$3.00.

The major changes are the addition of a new chapter on "Scientific Writing: An Introduction to General Semantics" and thirteen entirely new selections for reading.

The Practice of Composition: Form A. By JOHN M. LIERZEK. Macmillan. 3d ed. Pp. 486. \$3.25.

Much of the tried and true material remains from former editions, but there is new material also. The biggest change is perhaps that of approach, which is more informal than previously and suggestive rather than mandatory.

Readings for Liberal Education. Edited by LOUIS G. LOCKE, WILLIAM N. GIBSON, and GEORGE ARMS. Rinehart. Pp. [1360]. \$4.00.

Here under one cover and one name are the two volumes issued last year with the titles *Toward Liberal Education* and *Introduction to Literature*.

A College Book of American Literature. Edited by MILTON ELLIS, LOUISE POUND, GEORGE WEIDA SPOHN, and FREDERICK J. HOFFMAN. 2d ed. American Book Co. Pp. 1107. \$5.00.

Chief changes are in the last section devoted to twentieth-century literature.

American Life in Literature. Edited by JAY B. HUBBELL. 2 vols. Rev. ed. Harper's. Vol. I, pp. 981; Vol. II, pp. 957. Each, \$4.50.

Both material and format considerably changed from the earlier 1936 edition by addition of new material and by rewriting, but the emphasis is still upon our literature as an expression of American thought and as a record of American life.

English Literature and Its Backgrounds. Edited by BERNARD D. GREBANIER, SAMUEL MIDDLEBROOK, STITH THOMPSON, and WILLIAM WATT. 2 vols. Rev. ed. Dryden Press. Vol. I, pp. 1192; Vol. II, pp. 1216. Each, \$4.75.

Many changes from 1939 edition, but purpose still to provide a generous anthology of English prose and poetry, to include selections from foreign writers who notably influenced English literature, and to provide introductions and notes at the student level. Selections from Beowulf to Emlyn Williams. Illustrated.

Handbook of Public Speaking. By A. R. THOMPSON. Rev. ed. Harper's. Pp. 177. \$1.50.

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